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FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 34 & 36 North Moore St., N. Y.
NEW YORK, February 28, 1891.

{ PRICE }
5 CENTS.

Vol. II.

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Around the World in a Sail Boat.

BY
HARRY
KENNEDY.



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Around the World in a Sail Boat.

By HARRY KENNEDY, (The Great Ventriloquist.)

CHAPTER I.

THE "SHOOTING STAR."

"WELL, we are all ready for a start at last. I can think of nothing else we are likely to need."

"No, I think we have everything. When will Sam be along?"

"He'll be here shortly now. He is busy getting his hooks and lines in order."

"It's almost a shame to put up such a job on the 'ole man,' as he calls himself, but we can't get along without him."

"No, we must have a third hand of some sort, and Sam knows a little of everything."

"And he doesn't tumble at all?"

"Him! He wouldn't drop if a house fell on him."

"Won't he be a sick old nigger, though, tomorrow morning?"

"Sick is no name, but he won't be the solitary instance. Ah! there is our little beauty."

The speakers were two boys whose ages might be about eighteen or nineteen. Both were dressed in a sort of a yachting costume. They were walking rapidly along a little woodland path that led to the sea shore, and one carried upon his shoulder a small cask, while the other held in his arms a roll of canvas that bore the appearance of a sail.

A fine dog of the Newfoundland breed followed at their heels.

The first speaker, who was probably a year or so the eldest, was a singularly handsome youth, with a figure the model of physical strength, with curling chestnut hair, light complexion and raven hair and eyes. His name was Frank Weston—that of his companion Jack Stetson.

Both, it was plain to be seen, were fine specimens of American youth, well able to take care of themselves wherever they might be and under any circumstances.

Jack's expression of admiration had not been called forth by any lovely member of the opposite sex. As they had been speaking a sudden turn in the path had brought them in sight of a miniature harbor, where, a hundred yards or so from shore, a boat lay at anchor.

His admiration was not undeserved, for in the clear moonlight she arose and fell with the gentle ripple of the water, graceful as a swan.

Walking rapidly to the beach, the two boys placed their burdens on a small skiff that lay at the water's edge, and, calling the dog and stepping in themselves, in a few moments were on board of the boat that lay in the stream.

Upon coming nearer to her it became evident at once that she was of most peculiar construction.

About thirty feet in length, the breadth of beam at first sight seemed to be rather out of proportion, being about nine and a half feet.

Lying low in the water, it was completely decked over, rising in the center nearly eighteen inches higher than at the gunwale so as to assume a semi-circular form.

There were no bulwarks of any kind, so that should a sea break over her it would at

once wash off again without meeting any opposition.

Light was admitted to the cabin by small circular panes of glass inserted in the hatches.

It was upon descending to the cabin, however, that the peculiar construction became more noticeable.

The dimensions of the cabin were much less than might have been supposed, judging from the size of the boat, and it was not until the reason was explained that the cause could be understood.

The explanation, however, was simple—it was in reality not one boat, but two.

A second shell, even stronger than the outer one, was built inside, leaving a space of nearly nine inches between it and the outer planking.

Along the bottom and keel was fastened several hundred weight of leaden ballast, but upon the sides this interstice was filled with securely fastened layers of cork.

By this arrangement it was impossible for the boat to swamp in the heaviest sea. Even were it filled to the gunwale it could not sink below the water's edge.

Through the center of this filling of cork a hollow metal pipe ran around the boat, communicating with an ingeniously contrived funnel-shaped opening near the rudder.

In several parts of the cabin there were openings like the mouth of a speaking tube, so that in heavy weather when the hatches had to be closed its occupants might still be furnished with fresh air.

The aperture in the stern with which this pipe communicated was furnished with a self-acting revolving cylinder, so that in any but the heaviest weather the sea spray would break over it without entering the pipes.

This, however, was only provided for an emergency, as when the cabin was filled with pure air, and the hatches closed, there was sufficient space to keep two persons from suffocating for twelve hours.

The whole hull was built of the best seasoned oak, and copper fastened.

The rigging was of the simplest description, being somewhat similar to that of an ordinary cat boat.

It consisted of but one mast, flying boom, small topmast and bowsprit.

The canvas was simply a mainsail, topsail, and foresail.

In the bow a small, flat deck was built, upon which stood a small brass cannon such as is used for signals.

In the stern was a similar one for the convenience of the person steering.

A light railing of a few inches in height ran around the whole boat.

This, however, like the two decks, was merely superficial, and should they be all washed away, it would not in any way interfere with the navigation of the boat.

The hull was painted flake white with a narrow green strip, while on either side of the bow was a single metal star, and on the stern, in raised letters, the words Shooting Star.

The space below deck was divided by two

oak knees, firmly clasped with copper bolts, into three sections.

In the forward division was stored their provisions, water, and ammunition for the cannon.

In the second were two bunks the whole length of the division, raised about nine inches from the floor, and with a passage of about a foot in width between them.

In the third and largest compartment were two other similar bunks, while the remaining space was devoted to a small table, an oil stove and two extra casks of water.

As the height of the cabin at the highest point did not exceed four feet, every inch of room had to be utilized.

This had been done, and even the small space beneath the bunks was provided with drawers to hold stores.

It seemed evident that the boat had been built with some especial object in view—some object requiring the utmost strength and durability.

Such was indeed the case.

It was only the previous year, that from the small adjacent town of New Bedford, Captain Crapo and his wife had set out in their attempt of crossing the Atlantic in a small boat.

It will at once be remembered that the project was looked upon by the majority of people as the most utter foolhardiness, and their escape from death as little less than a miracle.

It always happens that in such an attempt as that of the captain and his wife, there are many imitators who not infrequently improve upon the original idea.

Such was the case in the present instance.

No sooner had the pair set out upon their voyage than a well-known sporting character made up his mind to at least rival, if not outdo, the adventurous pair, and had a boat constructed on plans of his own for that purpose.

This was the Shooting Star.

He had adopted the rig of the common cat-boat in preference to that used by Captain Crapo, as being more easily handled in case of a sudden squall.

He had spared neither pains nor expense to make it as near perfection as possible.

Every rope, sail and pulley was duplicated and stowed away in the cabin to be on hand should emergency require.

Just, however, as the last improvement was made and the boat ready for sea, his sudden death put an end to the project.

All his property was sold by order of his executors, and the Shooting Star was purchased at a nominal price for use as a pleasure boat by Frank's father.

Frank's father was a manufacturer, retired from business, who lived on a fine estate of his own a mile so from the town of New Bedford.

As the boy's mother had died when he was quite a child, and his father, marrying again, had another family of children, home was not so pleasant to him as under other circumstances it might have been.

His step-mother seemed, for some reason or

other, to have contracted a dislike for him, and her influence imperceptibly built up a barrier between his father and himself, so that he was thrown pretty much upon his own resources for companions and amusement.

Jack Stetson, his chosen friend and companion, was not blessed with half the other's good fortune. His life had never been a very pleasant one, and indeed, who his father and mother had been he was unable to say.

His history, however, was not without an element of romance.

Nearly seventeen years before this story opens there had been a terrific storm all along the New England coast, bringing with it ruin to many wealthy ship owners, and death and sorrow to numberless fishermen's homes.

During the storm, and for days and weeks after it had ceased, the whole coast was strewn with dead bodies of every age and sex, but all alike the victims of the fury of the sea.

Among the rest, during the very height of the tempest, a woman and a child lashed to a spar were cast upon the beach just below the little town.

Among the bystanders were many charitable and willing hands to seize upon the spar, and cutting the lashings that held them, convey the inanimate bodies beyond the reach of the breakers.

For one, at least, however, assistance came too late.

The woman, who by her attire and the pattern of the jewelry she wore, was evidently a foreign nurse, was quite dead, but the child, who was a boy of between two and three years, was still alive.

His clothing was of the finest material, but beyond a small gold locket suspended by a slender chain about his neck, there was nothing by which he could be identified.

The locket was of elegant Etruscan workmanship, and contained the portrait of a woman of almost supernatural beauty, with a shower of golden hair falling about her head and shoulders like a halo.

Was this marvelously beautiful girl—her portrait bespoke her to be little more—the child's mother?

Who could tell? It was a secret of the sea.

That she was and had fallen a victim to the storm that had spared her child seemed more than probable, for though the incident found a place in every newspaper in the Union, no one claimed the waif, and adopted by a benevolent old couple, who bestowed upon him their own name, he grew up under their care.

A year or more before the date of our story, however, the old couple had died suddenly, within a few months of each other, and since then his life had not been so pleasant a one.

The old people's nephew, who inherited their property, was an entirely different person from what they had been, and although he was not actually unkind, in a thousand little nameless ways he made the boy feel his dependence upon him.

This, to Jack's proud spirit, was gall and wormwood, the more so that there was no particular act of unkindness of which he could complain, and he determined to leave the home that was so distasteful to him and go to sea.

The sea was his passion, his delight. He could imagine no greater happiness than standing on the deck of a good ship, plowing the briny billows, and feeling the salt spray of the waves upon his face.

It was about this time he made the acquaintance of Frank Weston.

Frank also cherished somewhat similar projects. He was too restless and dissatisfied at home, and wanted to go out into the world and make a place there for himself.

Many were the discussions and propositions broached between the two boys, until the undertaking of Captain Crapo giving them the starting cue, their vague desires and ideas took definite shape.

They determined to outdo his adventurous attempt and make a tour of the world.

This resolution taken, the next question was how was it to be accomplished?

For a long time there seemed no feasible answer to this question, until at length chance threw the means in their way when Frank's father purchased the *Shooting Star*.

It seemed as if fortune was playing right into our heroes' hands.

Is was too good a chance to be let pass—such an opportunity might never occur again,

No sooner had the boat been brought home, than by means of saving every cent that came into their possession and disposing of every superfluous article they possessed, they managed to accumulate sufficient provisions to last for several weeks, and only waited a favorable opportunity to take their departure without their absence being noticed until it was too late to prevent it.

The means by which their stores were to be replenished they left to the future and good luck.

The opportunity for their departure was furnished sooner than they expected by the departure of Frank's father and his family on a visit to Boston.

They only now wanted a third hand, in case one of them should be sick or disabled.

Who this third one should be was a puzzle for some time, until at last Jack hit upon an idea.

"Why not take Sam?" he suggested.

Sam was an old negro who had been a servant in the Weston family for years. He had held Frank upon his knee when he was a child, and had grown to have a strong attachment for him.

"Sam would be the very fellow," Frank answered, "for he knows a little about everything. He wouldn't come, though, and he might give the whole thing away."

"Don't tell him where we are going till we get outside."

"But how will we get him on board?"

"Tell him we are going fishing," Jack answered.

After a little more discussion, the plan was adopted. Sam, who was extremely fond of fishing, was easily induced to accompany them, and the two boys were only now waiting for him to make his appearance to start upon their adventurous scheme.

Hardly had they stepped into the little skiff and returned to the shore again, than Sam made his appearance, with his arms full of fishing tackle.

"Halloo, Sam! you've got along?" Frank said.

"Yes, Massa Frank," the old negro answered, "de ole man had to fetch all de gear. Bofo youse gone forgot all de hooks and lines."

"Oh, that's nothing," Jack said, with a laugh; "we've caught our fish—a big black bass."

Frank laughed, but Sam could not see the joke.

"How long will it take us to reach the fishing-banks, Sam?" asked Frank.

"About de time the mornin's broke, wid dis good wind. Dat's de time dey bites de best. Golly, honey, but de ole man loves to be haulin' dem in."

"All right; let's go aboard, then, and get started."

In blissful ignorance of the snare he was walking into, Sam stepped on board the skiff, and in a few moments the three stood on the deck of the boat.

A fresh breeze was blowing from the shore, and a few minutes later, with all her canvas spread, in the mellow moonlight, the little *Shooting Star* was standing out to sea.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER THE STORM.

As Sam had predicted, by the time the dawn began to break they had reached the fishing-banks.

The old negro was in the highest spirits at the idea of the sport he was going to have, and notified the boys that this was the spot to cast anchor.

"Well, I guess we won't mind any fish this morning," Frank said, in a careless tone. "We have got grub enough on board to last for a week or two."

The old negro stared with such a ludicrous expression of bewilderment that the boys could not help laughing.

"And youse ain't gwine ter fish?" he asked.

"No," Jack answered, "I told you last night we'd hooked our fish. We only wanted to get you on board. We are going to catch the Flying Dutchman, and never stop till we have gone around the world."

To depict Sam's consternation and dismay as he began to realize that the boys were, in earnest, is beyond the power of pen or penmanship.

He alternately stormed and attempted to persuade them to relinquish their idea, until finding both courses equally in vain, he gave it up in despair, and sat in silence the very picture of ebony-colored despondency.

Our heroes had laid out a somewhat singular plan of route for themselves, determining their first landing place should be the Bermudas, the next the Bahamas, Cuba or one of the other West Indian Islands, and they now accordingly turned the boat's course to east, north by east.

They had produced charts of the route, and both knew enough of navigation to keep a reckoning.

About noon a ship hove in sight whose colors Frank, by aid of the telescope, made out to be American.

No sooner had he communicated this information to his companions than Sam determined to make one more desperate appeal to induce them to return.

"Oh, Massa Frank!" he exclaimed, raising his hands in the air, "it was de good dressed Lord sent her here on purpose, and ef you tote dem, Massa Frank, et was you yourself, dey'd shuah gone took us home safe."

The only effect the appeal had upon the boys' resolution was to break into a fit of hearty laughter at the comic spectacle Sam presented.

"Sam," said Jack, "you're no good. Old Crusoe is a better man than you, any day."

The dog hearing his name spoken, responded by wagging his tail, but the old negro let his hands fall, and shook his head despondingly.

"It's all your fault, Jack Stetson," he said, reproachfully. "Massa Frank never would tink of goin' to come at all if it was not for you. But, chile, mark what de ole man says, you'll be sorry for it yet."

"Sam," said Jack, with an air of assumed severity, "such expressions come under the head of mutiny. Your croakings are enough to bring bad luck to a whole fleet. You are worse than Jonah, and if you do not stop, the first whale we meet, pop overboard you'll go and be swallowed up."

After this Sam seemed to have resigned himself to the inevitable, and went about his duties, assisting in working the boat and preparing the meals, with an air as if he only waited from minute to minute for a sudden and terrible death.

For four days our adventurers enjoyed a fresh and favorable breeze, and their little craft skimmed over the billows swift and lightly as a sea-bird.

By their reckoning they had gone nearly five hundred miles, and were about latitude thirty-five.

Beyond meeting occasional homeward-bound vessels, with whom they exchanged salutations and verified their reckoning, they had met with no adventures of any kind.

It was beginning to grow monotonous.

On the evening of the fourth day, however, it became evident a storm was brewing.

Great masses of clouds began to pile up on the horizon, and the wind had that peculiar warning whistle that always precedes a storm.

Several of those sea-birds, known among seamen as Mother Carey's chickens, skimmed rapidly past them, close to the surface of the water.

A dull heaviness pervaded the atmosphere and a roll as of distant thunder came from the leaden colored waves.

Our heroes had heard and read of the rapidity with which storms gather in these latitudes, and made haste to lower the sails and make everything taut and trim.

Hardly had these precautions been taken before the hurricane was upon them in all its fury.

In an instant it had piled the waves mountain high, with great troughs between them of churning foam. It caught the little boat and tossed it from billow to billow like a straw in a whirlwind.

The air was filled with electric flashes, that lit up with a fearful brilliancy all that desolate waste of tempestuous sea.

The thunder never ceased for an instant, peal succeeding peal with a sound like a thousand cannonades.

To say that our heroes were not filled with awe would be to proclaim them more than mortal, but the knowledge of their danger did not deprive them of the use of their faculties.

It seemed, indeed, if anything, to have the opposite effect.

To attempt to stem the fury of the tempest was worse than madness. All they could do was to keep their little craft straight before

the wind, and not allow it to be engulfed in the trough of the billows.

This Frank and Jack, alternately at the helm, managed to do with a skill that would have done no discredit to far more experienced seamen.

As for Sam, crouching in mortal terror in the little cabin, he never ceased to pray and bellow forth verses of old camp meeting hymns the whole of that terrible night.

At last, however, the morning broke, and with it signs of the storm abating. By the time the sun rose its fury had visibly subsided, and by noon nothing but the long rolling swell of the waves told of the fury of the previous night's tempest.

Their little craft had proved its trustworthiness, and no damage had been done either to it or the rigging, but one serious calamity had befallen them.

Driven out of their course by the tempest's fury, they had lost their reckoning.

Their compass, however, was uninjured, and they once more set their course in the direction it had been before.

As evening came on the slight breeze seemed to be gradually dying away altogether, and there appeared every prospect of being becalmed.

Their situation was now far from a pleasant one.

They had no means of calculating how far they had been driven out of their right course by the hurricane, and such a thing was possible as that they might lay becalmed for a day or two—perhaps a week.

Should this happen their plight would be pitiable indeed, for not being accustomed to the task of laying in provisions, their stores were beginning to get low, while, as for water, in a few days they would be wholly without any.

A sail would now be to them the most welcome sight they could behold, but far in every direction as the eye and glass could reach, nothing could be seen but a desert waste of water.

Just as the sun was going down, however, away on the horizon they caught sight of something drifting.

The glad hope that it was a sail filled their breasts with animation, and they all eagerly strained their eyes to discover if it was so; but even with the aid of the telescope they were not near enough to discover if it were or not.

The sails being all spread they caught what little wind there was, and the boat slowly drifted toward the distant object.

In the course of half an hour or so more the wind had died away altogether, and the sails hung flapping idly on the mast, but they had neared the object of scrutiny enough to see it was not a ship, but some large dark object, evidently a raft, on which an improvised mast with a piece of canvas, most likely a signal of distress, had been raised.

The thought that it might be some survivors of the last night's storm less fortunate than themselves was sufficient to drive all thoughts of their own predicament out of our heroes' heads at once.

Hastily clewing up the now useless sails and unshipping the pair of oars strapped inside the thwarts they placed them in the rowlocks and bent themselves to them with a will.

In less than half an hour they were within hailing distance, and resting on their oars they gave an encouraging "ahoy!"

No voice answered the call, however, and they once more bent to the oars until in a few minutes the boat grated against the side of the raft. The night had fallen by this time and the moon had not yet arisen. Sam had lighted the lantern, however, and Frank, taking it from him, stood up in the boat and held it above his head so as to throw its light upon the raft, when the cause of their not being answered became evident at once.

Lashed to the raft were three human figures, unconscious or dead.

CHAPTER III. A CRITICAL SITUATION.

To make the boat fast and spring upon the raft was the work of a moment.

The three figures were those of a man and a woman, and a young girl of about fourteen or fifteen.

The man and woman were both dead, but a slight quiver in the girl's body showed that life still remained.

Even in the dim light thrown by the lantern the boys could see she was of great beauty.

Her complexion was that of a lily, while her black hair and eyebrows formed the most unexpected and fascinating contrast with her pale face. Her features were regular as a sculptor's ideal, and her hands and feet were of almost infantile smallness.

There was no time, however, at present for the boys to admire her beauty, and giving her into Sam's care, they proceeded to examine the other bodies and make sure that life was extinct.

A few moments' examination proved that such was really the case. Both the bodies were stiff and rigid, and had evidently been so for some hours.

A moment's reflection also was sufficient to convince our heroes that they were no blood relations of the beautiful girl whose life they had just saved.

From their features and dress it was more probable that they were servants who had been intrusted with the care of her.

As far as the bodies of the man and woman were concerned, all our heroes could do was to give them as proper burial as the place and circumstances permitted.

This was accordingly done, and with a heavy weight at their heads and feet they were reverently committed to the waves.

Before leaving the raft, however, the attention of our two young adventurers was attracted by another object.

This was an iron-bound chest of antique workmanship, lashed firmly to the timbers beside the prostrate bodies, and so heavy that it took their united strength, as well as Sam's assistance, to transport it on board their own craft.

By the time the simple funeral was over, and the chest had been conveyed on board, the girl had recovered consciousness, but though she was able to speak, she was evidently delirious and talking incoherently.

More than this, her words were quite unintelligible to our heroes, as they were in a language they did not understand.

Though attracted by the wonderful beauty of the girl, our heroes could not but acknowledge that she would be a most serious drawback to their enterprise.

To think of taking her with them on their proposed tour was, of course, utterly out of the question. All that could be done was to wait until they reached some port, where her language, which was evidently Spanish, could be understood, and more fitting guardians found to take care of her.

Meanwhile the little cabin was given up to her use, and she was placed under the special care of Sam.

All that night and most of the next day the calm still continued. There was not wind enough to stir the flag upon the mast, and the sun poured down with overpowering heat.

The sea, far as eye could reach on every side was smooth as a shield of polished silver.

Toward the following evening, however, a slight breeze sprang up, and with all sail spread the little Shooting Star once more stood slowly upon her course.

It only lasted an hour or two, and when the following morning broke they again lay like a painted boat upon a painted ocean.

As the morning mists cleared away and the sun rose, they could see, a mile or two distant, standing in bold relief against the sky, the long, low-lying hull of a large schooner.

Even at that distance there was something about the long, low hull, with its slanting, rakishly-set spars, which suggested to the boys that it might be as well to give the stranger as wide a berth as possible.

Another circumstance that increased their suspicion was that no colors of any kind flew from the mast or peak.

In these latitudes pirates had more than once been encountered, and it was just as likely as not this might prove to be one.

Like themselves, she was evidently becalmed, for want of wind to continue on her course.

Even while they were thus speculating upon her character and intentions, they could see by means of the telescope that a crowd had gathered upon the deck, and were evidently directing their glances towards them.

The next moment the sound of a gun came booming on their ears.

Still looking through the glass they could see that a boat was being lowered from the

schooner and a crew taking their places at the oars.

Counting them as they came down the vessel's side, they made them out to be ten in all.

Little doubt now remained in our heroes' minds that they had a veritable pirate to encounter.

Ten against two—for they did not count much upon Sam's assistance in such an emergency—certainly was great odds.

Nevertheless our adventurers were determined not to show the white feather, but fight it out to the last, and accordingly began to make preparations for their defense.

In laying in their store they had not neglected to provide nearly a hundred weight of powder, besides a proportionate supply of missiles both for the small brass cannon in the bow as well as for their own personal weapons.

These consisted of a pair of the largest size navy Colt's revolvers, and a huge blunderbuss which had seen service in the Revolutionary war.

This last, as well as the cannon, they now crammed almost to the muzzle with a double charge of powder and a miscellaneous assortment of shot, bullets and iron nails.

Their revolvers were of course loaded with the regulation cartridges, and with them stuck ready in their belts, our heroes awaited the approach of the supposed pirates.

The young lady, whose mind seemed still to be wandering, was as much out of harm's way as possible in the cabin, while Sam stood forward, ready to assist in the working of the cannon.

By the time these preparations had been completed, the advancing boat had come within speaking distance, and a man sitting in the stern arose to his feet, and hailed them in some foreign language.

No answer being returned, after a moment's pause he again repeated the summons, this time, however, in English.

"Boat ahoy!"

"Ahoy!"

By this time the boat had approached near enough for our heroes to distinguish the figures and faces of its crew, and a more villainous set of countenances were seldom seen.

All low-browed, swarthy-skinned, and with features of the most repulsive type, they appeared to belong to some foreign nationality—Italian or Spanish.

All were dressed in gay-colored attire, and wore long, dangerous-looking knives stuck in the sashes wound around their waists.

The man who had hailed our hero still addressed them in English, fluently, but with a marked foreign accent.

"Where do you hail from?"

Concluding that a bold front was the best policy, and that any show of courtesy would be thrown away upon the men he had to deal with, Jack Stetson placed his foot upon the gunwale of the boat, and answered, with a defiant air:

"What business is it of yours, anyhow? Where do you hail from yourself?"

"Ah, young senor," the Spaniard answered, with a smile upon his lips, but a frown upon his face, "this is also no business of yours, but as you want to know, I do not care if I tell you. We are from the coast of Africa with a cargo of niggers."

"Well, suppose you are? That is nothing to us."

"No," the other answered, with the same evil look, "but we have been becalmed a long time, and lost many of our cargo. We only came to see you through curiosity, but now we are here we must combine profit with pleasure. That nigger you have with you is worth a thousand dollars in Cuba, and we must have him. So just let him step on board our boat, and we will say thanks and adios."

The abject terror of poor old Sam at this proposition cannot be depicted. His face almost became white. As for Jack, he affected to break into a laugh.

"You must have plenty of cheek to think of such a thing," he said. "Suppose, though, that we decline your proposal?"

"Then, senor," the Spaniard answered, in the same suave tone, "we will have to take him, and perhaps in doing so, we should also be obliged to kill you, and give you as food for the fishes."

"Well, then," Jack answered, in the same cool tone, "you will have to try it, for we will never give him up."

"Santa Maria! Do you dare to brave me?" the Spaniard began, in a sudden fury, but Jack interrupted him in a calm, resolute voice:

"Are you the captain of the ship?"

"Yes."

"Your men only await your orders to kill us?"

"Yes."

"Then tell them to do it; but the instant you raise your voice, or one of them stirs an inch, you die."

As he spoke, with the rapidity of lightning, Jack slightly changed his position, and the next instant the captain of the slaver found himself looking down the twelve-inch barrel of a navy revolver.

CHAPTER IV.

JUST IN TIME.

THE situation was certainly a critical one.

Jack's determined manner and action had for a moment or two the effect of completely paralyzing the captain of the slaver and his crew.

For a breathing space both parties stood motionless as if carved out of stone.

The suspense was at last broken by the slaver captain turning and rapidly speaking some words in Spanish to his crew.

They answered as one man with a fierce yell, and sprang from their seats, their knives and fire-arms flashing in their hands.

The yell had hardly subsided, however, before, true to his word, Jack's revolver flashed fire, and with a single cry of mortal agony, the slaver captain reeled and fell backward across the thwarts of the boat.

Simultaneously with the report of Jack's weapon, Frank had sprang to his side with his revolver leveled, and both only awaited another hostile movement to again open fire.

Again the slavers stood irresolute, evidently discussing among themselves as to their next move.

Again there was a moment or two of suspense.

It was suddenly broken, however, by a report, sounding in the silence like the noise of a hundred cannon, and the reverberation of which made the little boat shiver like a leaf from stem to stern.

Following it came wild cries of agony, and when the smoke cleared away, it could be seen that only four of the crew of the slaver's boat still retained their upright position.

The effect was startling, but the explanation was simple.

It will be remembered that among the weapons of defense our heroes possessed, was an old revolutionary blunderbuss, and which had been loaded almost to the very muzzle with every description of missile that came to hand.

When the negro Sam had heard the demand of the slaver captain that he should be given up to them a feeling of the utmost terror had taken possession of him.

It has been said that fear often makes cowards brave, and in this instance, at any rate, it made Sam desperate.

From his position in the bow of the boat he could rake the other fore and aft.

No sooner had this fact dawned upon his mind than, seizing the old blunderbuss, he placed it to his shoulder and pulled the trigger.

The effect upon the slavers has already been told, but that upon the negro himself was scarcely less terrible.

No sooner had his finger pressed the trigger than a whole firmament of stars seemed to revolve before his vision, and the force of the concussion sent him flying against the opposite railing of the deck, where he lay groaning as if in mortal agony.

"De good Lord be blessed," he said, without attempting to move, "dat I saved de children before he called me. Take me now, Abraham to thy buzzum. De ole man am ready to travel home."

Notwithstanding their own peril at the moment, our heroes could hardly refrain from laughing at the ludicrous figure presented.

A moment's observation, however, showed them their danger was over for the time.

The survivors of Sam's terrific onslaught had seized the oars, and were proceeding to row away for dear life, evidently having become convinced that discretion was the better part of valor.

As soon as they had become convinced of this fact and that no treachery was meditated, our heroes went to the assistance of Sam.

"Sam, you're a trump," said Jack, taking his hand to assist him to his feet. "The colored troops fought nobly that time. Come, get up now, old man. What's the matter with you?"

"For de good Lord's sake, Massa Frank," said Sam, "don't tech me. Jest leave me where I is. I'se done saved bofe your lives, and so don't mock de ole man, but let him die in peace."

"Why, you old humbug," cried Frank, "there's nothing the matter with you. Come, get up on your pins, and you'll be all right."

Before Sam had time to make an indignant reply, Frank was called from his side by Jack, who had taken the telescope and was watching the retreating boat.

As Frank sprang to his side, he gave the telescope into his hands.

"Look," he said, laconically.

Frank, raising the glass to his eye, saw that from the side of the schooner two more boats had been lowered and filled with men, and were coming at full speed towards them.

It seemed now that their doom was only delayed, not diverted.

By no human possibility could they hope to be victorious over more than twice the former number of opponents.

A lucky chance had saved them before, but it could not do so again.

The odds against them were literally more than twenty to one.

A thought came simultaneously into each of our heroes' minds, without, however, finding words.

If a sudden breeze would only spring up they might still have a chance for their lives.

Almost as if in answer to the unexpressed wish, the pennant rose and fluttered with a sort of lazy motion from the mast.

"Here, Sam," cried Frank, "no more death agonies. A breeze is springing up. Help us to crowd on all sail, and we may give them the slip yet."

Sam was as well aware as either of them of the importance of the fact, and with surprising alacrity for a man whose very moments were numbered he arose to his feet.

"I'll do my best, chile," said he, "I know I'se bleeding inside, but I'll go on in my tracks till I drops."

In a few minutes every stitch of canvas was spread, and the small boat began to move slowly ahead.

The breeze freshened up every moment, but the advantage given our heroes was not so great as at first sight it seemed.

Though the crews of the pursuing boats had returned to the schooner, it was only to crowd on all sail on the vessel and stand away in chase.

A puff of smoke and the sound of a report, although the shot fell far astern of the little Shooting Star, showed that the slavers by no means intended to give up the pursuit.

Again it seemed the young adventurers' doom was only put off a little while, for, built as she was for fast sailing, and with every stitch of canvas she could carry crowded on, the slaver could not fail to gain upon them.

As soon as all the sails were spread upon the Shooting Star, and Jack had taken his place at the helm, Frank and Sam descended to the cabin to calm the fears of their beautiful guest—the young Spanish lady they had rescued from the raft, and who, with Crusoe for company, had been placed under hatches in expectation of a fight taking place.

They found her very much agitated, but gathering from Frank's gestures that the danger was past, she gradually became more calm, and ascended with him to the deck.

Hardly had they stepped through the hatchway when a loud huzza broke from Jack's lips.

"Look!" he said, pointing with his hand away to the horizon ahead of them.

All following the direct'n of his pointing hand saw away on the horizon a cloud of smoke rising against the sky, and evidently proceeding from the smoke stack of a steamer.

"Just in the nick of time, too," Frank answered, "for that rascally slaver is fast gaining upon us."

Even while he was speaking a shot from the pursuing craft fell not more than a hundred yards in their wake.

"Half an hour more and they would have been able to sink us," said Jack. "But, see, they have sighted the steamer as well as we, and have changed their course."

Such was indeed the case, for even while he

was speaking the slaver made a sudden tack and stood away in an almost opposite direction.

The wind had blown up quite briskly by this time, and the little craft, with all canvas spread, stood ahead in the direction of the steamer.

The little cannon in the bow was fired, and in a few minutes an answering report came from the steamer, which also changed its course slightly so as to meet the boat.

In less than an hour they were within hailing distance of each other.

It was evident to our heroes that they were the object of quite a commotion on board the steamer, which, stopping her engines, lay to and allowed the little Shooting Star to come alongside.

The steamer was the yacht Inez from Havana, and no sooner had they lain alongside, and the ladders placed over the side, than an elegant-looking middle-aged man descended, and clasping the young girl whose life our young heroes had saved in his arms, he pressed her again and again to his breast.

Mutual explanations followed.

The distinguished-looking man was Senor Manuela, one of the largest and wealthiest planters in the whole island of Cuba.

The young lady, who was his only child, had been sent in care of two servants to finish her education and learn the English language in a seminary in Bermuda. When no tidings of the arrival of the vessel in which she had sailed was received, her father had started out in search of her to satisfy himself that she was either alive or dead.

The huge iron-bound box, on being opened, was shown to be full of bars of gold and silver, and jewels of priceless value, which had been sent with the girl to be deposited as her dowry in case of an accident in the troubled state of Cuban affairs happening either her father's life or property.

His gratitude to our heroes knew no bounds. There was nothing could be thought of which he would not have done to show it in some tangible way.

Our heroes contented themselves, however, with a few fresh supplies of provisions and water, and passing their promise to visit him at his estate as soon as they should arrive in Cuba.

They also learned that they were nearer the island than they had imagined, having been carried altogether out of their proposed course by the storm, and were now about latitude twenty-seven, and within a hundred and fifty miles of the Bahamas.

With favorable winds and weather they ought now be able to reach Nassau in less than three days, and Havana in about the same length of time later.

So with every expression of good will the yacht Inez steamed away with its rescued namesake on board, and our heroes followed more slowly in its wake, still upon its trip around the world and ready for further adventures.

CHAPTER V.

A DUEL.

THE next day our heroes sighted the Bahamas.

The following morning they passed the islands of Abacco and Elenthera by way of the northeast channel, and by next evening had reached the port of Nassau.

Here they only stayed sufficient time to enter their arrival at the custom house, and report themselves at the office of the American Consul, and the next day again proceeded on their journey to Cuba.

With favorable winds and weather, and without meeting with any adventures worth narrating, a little more than two days later they dropped anchor in the harbor of Havana.

From the first moment of their landing they found their fame had preceded them.

Senor Manuela had spread the news both of their adventurous undertaking and the rescue of his daughter, everywhere, and they were quite the lions of the hour.

Renewing his invitation in such terms as would admit of no refusal, our heroes became the planter's guests.

His estate, which was one of the largest on the island, was situated but a mile or two from the city, and from the very day of their arrival our heroes found themselves in a constant round of pleasure and gaiety.

Now that Inez had recovered from the effects of her accident, she seemed to have

grown even more beautiful, if such a thing were possible, and her sprightly manner and bewitching airs made her the undoubted belle of any company she chanced to be in.

A day or two was sufficient to show plainly that her graces were by no means thrown away upon Jack.

It must also be admitted that the young lady seemed to exert herself to please him especially, and appeared to take more enjoyment in his company than that of any one else.

The lack of a common language, however, was a serious drawback to the running smooth of the course of their true affection, and Jack accordingly set to work to teach her English, while in return the young lady strove to instruct him in her own liquid tongue.

If, however, they could not understand the language of each other's lips, that of their eyes and looks was sufficiently intelligible.

On the whole, the time passed so pleasantly that nearly ten days had elapsed since their arrival almost before our heroes realized the fact.

No sooner had they become impressed with this truth than they began to think seriously about proceeding on their tour.

So many earnest entreaties were made them, however, that they at last consented to stay for four days longer until a masquerade ball, which was to take place on that date, was over.

This ball was expected to be on a scale of greater magnitude and magnificence than had ever taken place in the city before, and was quite the leading topic of conversation.

As Inez had already made her decision to go in the character of Juliet, Jack immediately had his costume ordered for that of Romeo.

Frank, having no particular lady to whom he desired to attach himself, and determining to scoop in all the fun he could, selected a dress adorned with horns, hoofs and a huge tail, and assumed the character of a mischievous demon.

When at last the night arrived the whole city had almost the appearance of a southern city during the time of the carnival.

It seemed that everybody without exception, was going to attend the masquerade, and the principal theater in which it was held was literally packed.

As for Jack, his attention was pretty much monopolized the whole evening by his fair Juliet, but Frank flitted from one fair incognita to another, sipping pleasure whenever he could find it.

At last it seemed his roving fancy was taken captive for the time by a bewitching little Arcadian shepherdess, who by no means seemed to be annoyed at his attentions.

After dancing two or three dances with her and taking her to the refreshment saloon, all unconscious of the jealous scowls of a fierce-looking Mephistopheles whose glances followed them everywhere, they found themselves alone together in one of the private boxes.

Frank's vocabulary of Spanish was still very limited indeed, but he had managed to pick up a few phrases, enough evidently to make himself very agreeable to his fair companion.

When he had seen Frank and the lady leave the crowd, the Mephistopheles, who had been watching their every motion all the evening, also followed them.

Now, as he peered through the curtain and saw Frank and his fair companion set themselves side by side, the jealous look upon his face deepened into one of the most malignant hate.

Frank was evidently trying to persuade the fair shepherdess to remove her domino, which after a little coquettish hesitation she consented to do, and showed a most beautiful face with large dark eyes, pouting coral lips and teeth-like ivory.

No one in Frank's position could have done less than he did, and he stooped to kiss the peach-like cheek held so temptingly near.

Hardly had he done so, however, than the watching Mephistopheles, with an exclamation of smothered rage, sprang from his place of concealment and stood before them.

For a moment or two he was too enraged to speak.

"Carambo," he burst out at length, "what is this I see? You dare to kiss that lady!"

The lady, with a little ejaculation of alarm, had hastily replaced her domino, and would have made her escape, but Frank placed his arm around her waist and whispered to her not to be afraid.

"Well, suppose I did?" he answered, coolly. "What has that got to do with you? Perhaps it might be better for you if you were not so fond of sticking that long nose of yours into other people's business."

The rage of the Mephistopheles at this retort became almost ungovernable.

"My business?" he gasped. "Your impiety—my nose—I will pull your own."

As he spoke he reached forth his hand to carry out the threat, but before he could do so Frank's fist had shot out from the shoulder, and Mephistopheles measured his length on the floor.

In a moment he was up again, however, and with a long, glistening knife in his hand, sprang upon Frank.

With a rapid motion the boy seized his wrist, and closing with him bore him against the wall, and strove to make him relinquish his grasp of the weapon.

The lady, alarmed at the prospect of bloodshed, began to call loudly for assistance. In a few moments, more than a dozen persons had rushed into the box, among them our hero's friend, Senor Manuela.

The combatants were separated at once, and each told his story in his own language, the Cuban almost foaming at the mouth with rage as he did so.

Senor Manuela looked grave as he heard the cause of the quarrel.

"I am afraid, my young friend," he said, "you have unintentionally committed a great error. The gentlemen is Senor Garcia, one of the most influential men on the island, and the lady with whom you have had your little flirtation is his wife."

Frank began to see he had indeed put his foot in it.

"The worst of it is," his friend went on, "he insists upon your fighting him. By the code that governs our notions of honor here, it is impossible you can refuse."

"I have no intention of doing so," said Frank, putting on a bold front. "If it is any satisfaction to him, I am ready any time."

"He insists upon the duel taking place at once—within an hour."

"One time is as good as another, I suppose," Frank answered, "if you will be good enough to let Jack know of it and arrange everything."

"Certainly," the other answered. "Be kind enough to wait here a moment or two until I return."

Frank could not help owning to himself that he had got into a scrape this time he would much rather be out of. He had no particular fancy for setting himself up as a target for a jealous Cuban's aim, merely for the sake of a little harmless flirtation. However, there was no help for it, as he was determined to die sooner than show the slightest sign of weakening.

In a few minutes Senor Manuela returned, and taking his arm, led him to the door of the theater, where a carriage, with Jack inside, was waiting.

Giving some instructions in a low voice to the driver, Senor Manuela and Frank entered, and the carriage rolled away at a rapid pace.

After a drive of about half an hour, they stopped near a long stretch of sand along the seashore, and the Cuban, telling them this was the place of meeting, the three alighted.

Frank's antagonist, accompanied by friends, was already upon the ground, and the distance was measured off and the preliminaries arranged in almost total silence.

Of the three, Frank was by far the most calm and self-possessed.

Both Senor Manuela and Jack could not help showing by their manner the fear they felt for their friend's safety, but Frank's hand, as he took the pistol, was firm and steady as a rock.

There was a firm, clear moon, that shining on the long stretch of yellow sand made it almost as light as day.

The two principals in the duel stood back to back, twelve paces apart.

Senor Manuela stood, out of the range of the pistols, midway between them.

When the word three left his lips, the duelists were to turn and deliver their fire.

"Are you ready?" Senor Manuela asked. Both replied in the affirmative.

"One—two—three!"

As the last word left his lips both turned, and the two reports rang out simultaneously.

With a sharp cry of agony the Cuban

sprang into the air, and then fell face down-

ward on the sand, but Frank stood erect and uninjured.

All crowded around the prostrate man in silence for a moment or two.

"Have I killed him?" Frank asked, in a tone that showed the anxiety he felt.

"I do not think so," Senor Manuela answered, rising. "The wound is a dangerous one, but not necessarily fatal. You must look to your own safety now, however, for neither your life nor liberty is safe. You must fly."

CHAPTER VI.

A NIGHT CHASE.

LINKING his arm within that of Frank as he spoke, the Cuban walked rapidly to where the carriage was waiting.

"There is no time to be lost now," he added.

No sooner had they reached the carriage, and the three taken their seats, than the driver started his horses at a sharp pace in the direction of Senor Manuela's estate.

"It is impossible you can return to the town," he said, in explanation. "Even if you would escape the authorities for a time, you could not the paid assassins who are lying in wait for you."

The faces of both our heroes showed the surprise they felt at this piece of information.

"The paid assassins," they repeated.

"Yes," the Cuban answered; "I chanced to overhear the conversation between the brothers of your late antagonist and the bravos themselves, and in case you escaped your opponent's bullet, you were to be murdered and your bodies thrown into the harbor."

"Such things betoken a state of society to which you are doubtless wholly unaccustomed," Senor Manuela went on, "but unfortunately it exists. Your opponent is a man of great influence, and almost any act he chooses to countenance will be winked at by the authorities. Indeed it is not improbable that did all other means fail he would have you arrested as revolutionary agents. Your only sure means of safety is in leaving the island at once, this very night."

"But," Jack asked, "if we do not return to the town, how are we to reach our boat which lies in the harbor?"

"I have arranged all that," the Cuban answered. "While we have been engaged in our affair of honor yonder, my people have brought it up to the little creek below my estate, and have been placing stores on board so as to be in instant readiness to sail."

Our heroes began to thank him warmly for his kindness and forethought, but he checked them hastily.

"I owe you a far larger debt of gratitude than that amounts to," he said; "still you must remember you are by no means out of your danger yet. You have to run the blockade of the harbor, besides, which I do not doubt, when the wounded man's brother and his paid assassins find you have escaped, they will apply to the authorities and give chase. If it would aid your escape in any way, I would only be too happy to take you clear of the fort in my own yacht, but such a course would only have the directly opposite effect. I can, however, provide you with an old native pilot, who will take you out without detection if mortal man can. He has been an old smuggler and blockade-runner in his day, and will steer his boat under the very eyes of the revenue cutters without being seen."

By this time they had reached the planter's house, and, alighting from the carriage, were conducted to the dining-room where a lunch was prepared.

Inez had also returned from the masquerade, and in her usual dress, was waiting to receive them.

It was plain to be seen, however, that she was much agitated, and her eyes looked as if she had been weeping.

When the time came to say farewell she trembled so it seemed she must break down, altogether, nor could Jack, as he bent and kissed the little white, quivering hand, prevent a sort of strange feeling rising in his throat.

More than once or twice as they crossed the lawn to the shore he looked back toward the house, from the window of which a delicate lace handkerchief was waved as a lingering token of farewell after them.

Senor Manuela accompanied them to the beach where the boat, with Sam and Crusoe,

as well as the new pilot, already on board, lay awaiting them.

"You may depend on Gomez," he said. "He is true as steel, and if he does not take you out of the harbor in safety it is beyond the power of man to do so. Even if you are pursued you will have had a good start, and I think you need have no apprehension of being clear of the coast by the time the morning breaks."

With many other expressions of friendship and good will he shook hands warmly with our heroes and stood watching them get under way.

The last thing before our heroes stepped on board he placed a sealed package in Jack's hand, telling him to open it at his leisure.

In almost utter silence the sails were raised, the anchor weighed and with the Cuban pilot at the helm the little craft stood out from the shore.

The wind was blowing freshly from the land, and the boat, almost seeming to rejoice at once more being free from its moorings, skimmed the surface of the water like a sea-gull.

It soon was evident that Senor Manuela's praise of the native pilot was not undeserved.

Silent and motionless as a statue carved out of ebony, he sat at the helm, making the little craft leap to obey the guidance of his hand like a sentient thing.

Utter silence reigned on board.

Both our heroes' thoughts were too deep for words, while Sam, who, during his sojourn at the planter's estate, had begun to think there were worse things than circumnavigating the globe, now saw all his hopes again dashed from his lips, and was sunk in the depths of despair.

Still the little craft sped on without interruption, gliding among the hulls of the shipping and creeping along in the shadow of the shore and wharves.

There was something weird and phantom-like about her motions, and the utter silence of her crew.

More than once they passed under the guns of a fort, or the port of a man-of-war, but with such skill the pilot guided their course, that they passed without being hailed.

At length they reached the outer buoy, and in a few minutes more they would be clear of the harbor and standing out to the open sea.

Not until now, when they experienced the feeling of relief the fact brought, did they realize the extent of the restraint that had been weighing upon them.

Hardly had they begun to breathe more freely, however, than astern of them they saw a light gleaming upon the water.

The next instant the report of a gun sounded through the silence, but the pursuing boat was evidently still out of range, as the shot splashed in the water far astern of them.

Straining every faculty, they listened intently, and from the puffing sound they surmised that the craft following them was a steam launch.

If such were indeed the case the could have but little hope of distancing them.

Holding a hurried consultation together our heroes signified to the pilot that as they now were able to dispense with his assistance, it was better he should make for the shore in the small boat he had brought in tow for that purpose, rather than run the risk of sharing their capture.

Accordingly relinquishing the helm into Jack's hands, the Cuban, with a respectful leave-taking in his own language, stepped into the smaller craft, and in a few moments had vanished in the direction of the shore.

Again our heroes held a hurried consultation.

It was evident they were in a trap.

Behind them was the town, which under the circumstances it was impossible they could return to, and before them the open sea.

Escape by either means seemed hopeless.

Even while they were speaking the sound of another gun came from the pursuers.

That they were gaining upon them was certain, for this time the shot splashed in the water not a hundred yards astern.

A desperate resolve came to our heroes.

They would not attempt to escape any longer, but lower the sails and await their pursuers' approach, returning shot for shot until they were near enough for their small arms to come into play.

Better thus to die like men in a hand to

hand fight, than be picked off singly without the chance of striking a blow in their own defense.

The resolve was no sooner made than put into execution.

The sails were lowered and the boat swung round so as to bring the small cannon in range with the pursuing launch.

The next moment Frank applied a match to the vent of the piece, and an answering report sounded through the night, and caused the little craft to quiver to her very keel.

Waiting until the smoke had cleared away, our heroes became aware that the light that had been following them was no longer visible.

It was plain their shot had not been thrown away.

The next moment, however, the light again appeared, and an answering shot splashed in the water beside them, sending a shower of spray over the deck of the boat.

By this time the dawn had already broken.

Streaks of saffron were shooting upwards from the horizon, and in less than half an hour it would be daylight.

Our heroes felt there was no alternative left them but to fight to the very death.

CHAPTER VII.

A FIGHT AT SEA.

FOR a second or two our heroes waited in utter silence.

It was suddenly broken by Jack's voice.

"Let us take the oars," he said, "and row off at an angle, or the next shot they fire will stand a fair chance of sinking us."

He seized one of the oars as he spoke, and Frank taking the other they sent the boat a few lengths of itself ahead in the proposed direction.

The wisdom of the course soon was evident.

Hardly had they done so than another shot came splashing in the water upon the very spot where a second or two before the boat had been rocking.

Had they waited a moment longer it must inevitably have struck them.

Our heroes looked at each other with a glance that spoke more than words, while Sam, with his eyes upturned until nothing but the whites were visible, kept up an incessant murmur of prayer, in a very ecstasy of terror.

By this time it had become light enough for the pursuers and pursued to be visible to each other.

Our heroes could discern that, as they had imagined, the pursuing craft was a steam launch, and they could also count that its crew numbered twelve or fourteen men.

Most of them were in the rough dress of common sailors, but four wore some sort of official uniform.

Seeing that our heroes had laid-to, and seemed content to offer no resistance they no longer made any attempt to fire upon them.

Their object was evidently not to kill them but to take them prisoners.

This last, however, our heroes were resolved they should never do.

They would fight it out to the last, and if needs be die before they were taken.

Still the odds against them made the resolve a desperate one.

Their opponents outnumbering them four to one, it looked almost a species of suicide to attempt any resistance.

With their revolvers loaded, however, and their cutlasses ready to hand, they awaited with the utmost calmness the approach of their antagonists.

After the lapse of a few minutes, they were within hailing distance of each other, and one of the men in uniform standing in the bow of the approaching launch called upon our heroes to surrender.

"For de Lord Almighty's sake, better done it, Massa Frank and Jack," entreated Sam. "Dey'll spar' our lives; an' ef you doesn't, fore God we'll all be murdered, suah."

To neither the Cubans' summons, nor the old negro's entreaties, however, did our heroes make any reply, but stood motionless as statues upon the deck.

The Cubans, evidently accepting their silence as a sign of submission, said no more, and in a few seconds the launch had come up to them until its sides almost grated against those of the little Shooting Star.

Both our heroes now felt that the moment had come for prompt and decided action.

A moment's indecision might prove utterly fatal to them.

No sooner, therefore, had the launch laid alongside than they cast out a grapping-iron placed in readiness, thus securely fastening the two crafts together.

By this, on the part of the Cubans, utterly unexpected action, the gun that stood in the bow of the launch was rendered practically useless.

There was nothing for it now but a hand-to-hand combat—a desperate fight against overpowering numbers.

So quickly had our heroes accomplished their design that almost before their opponents were aware of it it was done, and the boys back again in their former positions.

By this time, however, the crew of the launch had begun to crowd upon their deck.

Foremost among them was the man who had called upon them to surrender, and another dressed in a similar uniform.

No sooner had their feet stepped over the gunwales, however, than both our heroes' revolvers spoke simultaneously, and with a cry of agony the advancing men fell back among their companions.

For a moment or two the prompt action and determined manner of the boys had the effect of checking the boarders, and falling back they looked at one another in irresolution.

It was only for a moment, however, and then one of the other men in uniform, speaking some words in Spanish, sprang at their head and once more stepped on board the Shooting Star.

Again our heroes' weapons flashed fire, but the onslaught could not again be checked so easily, and the Cubans swarmed on board, occupying every inch of space upon the deck of the little craft.

For several seconds our heroes fought with superhuman bravery, their fire-arms and cutlasses dealing death around them, but it soon became evident that they must be overpowered by numbers.

The only advantage in favor of our heroes was that their antagonists, in that crowded space, could not use their fire-arms for fear of disabling their own comrades.

Frank's revolver had been knocked out of his hand, and he was defending himself valiantly with his cutlass against three opponents, while Jack was in even a worse plight, having been wounded in the head, while four of the ruffians were pressing so closely upon him as almost to crowd him by sheer force over the side of the boat.

Although all this has taken some time to relate, in reality it happened in an incredibly short space of time.

Little more than two minutes had passed since our heroes had thrown out the grapping-iron until their present critical position.

"Surrender, or die!" the foremost of the ruffians crowding upon Jack called out, and at the same moment another of his opponents striking the cutlass from his hand, he stood completely at their mercy.

"Never!" he cried, defiantly, resolved to die true grit to the last, and the ruffian who had demanded his surrender raised his arm to deal his death-blow.

It had not time to descend, however, before a savage cry rang out even above the noise of the conflict, and simultaneously the Cuban fell to the ground, his head cloven in two halves to the very chin.

At the same instant another ally bounded to the assistance of Frank, and seizing the foremost of his antagonists by the throat, the dog, Crusoe, dragged him over the side of the boat, and, with his teeth still fast in his flesh, held him beneath the water.

While the first of the flight had been taking place, Sam had crawled into the cabin, determining to be as far out of harm's way as possible, and still nourishing a lingering hope that the boys would give up their intention of fighting and peaceably surrender themselves to their pursuers.

When, however, the noise overhead told him that such a course was the very opposite of what they were doing, his affection for them triumphed over even his own mortal terror, and slipping the collar from the dog's neck, and seizing an ax, he sprang like a hero into the thick of the combat.

Now all the savage nature of his African forefathers seemed to have entered into him again, and once having tasted blood, it made him furious for more.

No sooner had the first man fallen beneath

his deadly stroke, than again and again the ax swung around his head, each time falling with a force that would have felled an ox, and having thus disposed of Jack's adversaries, he sprang to the assistance of Frank.

Jack also again regained possession of his cutlass, and the Cubans, of whom there were but five left, seeing the tables completely turned upon them, threw down their arms, and asked for their lives to be spared.

To this the only dissenting voice was that of Sam.

"Don't yer go for ter do it, Massa Frank," he said. "Kill them all—every last one. Let me get at them and I'll fix them."

It seemed that Sam's savage nature having once asserted itself, he had relapsed at once to a state of the most complete barbarism, and it is not improbable that he would at once have proceeded to put his words into execution had not Jack taken the ax from his hands.

"You should be ashamed of yourself, Sam," he said sternly. "You fought like a man just now, and saved all our lives, but to do any more would be murder."

Sam's ferocity, which, after all, had only been born of his fear, had begun to subside, and he became docile at once.

"You're right, Massa Jack," he said, "and de debbil must have got into his head and been runnin' away wid de ole man. But what's you gwine ter do wid dem scallawags now?"

During the time this conversation had been going on our heroes had been busy fastening the prisoners' wrists together, and now they were all securely bound.

Sam's question was a pertinent one that required some consideration before it could be answered.

To take them on board the Shooting Star as prisoners was of course utterly out of the question, while to return and land them upon the coast was equally impossible.

Were they placed on board of the launch and suffered to go back to the town, they would easily be able to return with a larger force for their capture before our heroes could get beyond their reach.

Something had to be done with them, however, and the only method our heroes could decide upon was to disable the machinery of the launch, and allow them to make their way back the best way they could.

Accordingly the cannon was thrown over the side, and the screw of the propeller broken so as to render it utterly useless, while all the arms and ammunition were placed on board the Shooting Star.

Then taking the flag flying in the stern as a trophy, our heroes unbound the prisoners' hands, and made them walk at the muzzle of a pistol, one by one, on board the launch.

When the last one had stepped on board, the grappling iron was removed and the launch cut adrift.

The tide was on the flow towards the coast, and our heroes felt no compunction in thus sending them adrift, as they were sure to be picked up by some vessel in the course of the day, and even if they were not, they would be able to utilize the seats as paddles, and so reach land before nightfall.

All traces of the short but bloody encounter were then washed from the deck, and with all sail spread the Shooting Star again stood out to sea.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FAIR INCOGNITA.

It is impossible, within the limited space of this story, to give a detailed description of each day's incidents, or even the most hasty sketch of the ever shifting scenes and aspects of nature through which our young adventurers passed.

To do so would take volumes.

Referring our readers for such information to the experiences of other travelers over the same route, we confine ourselves to the more stirring personal adventures of our heroes.

After the victorious termination of their fight at sea, off the mouth of the harbor of Havana, they kept on their course until they had rounded Cape San Antonio, and then stood away in a northeasterly direction for the Island of Jamaica, where, after a pleasant passage of about three days, they cast anchor in the harbor of Port Royal.

The wound Jack had received was a mere scratch, and not in the slightest degree dangerous.

Jack had before this time taken opportunity to open the package given him at parting by Senor Manuela, and found it contained gold coin to the value of several thousand dollars.

A most flattering letter of introduction was also given to one of the most prominent merchants in Rio de Janeiro, and our heroes, now relieved from any fear on the score of shortness of funds, determined to push on with their journey and make the Brazilian capital their next stopping place.

Remaining, therefore, only a few hours in Port Royal, merely long enough to replenish their stores, they again headed on their previous course.

The winds were favorable, though the heat was intense, being more than ninety in the shade, and in five days more they reached the island of Trinidad.

After leaving Port of Spain, the capital of the island, the heat became almost unbearable during the following five days, in which time they had passed the coast of Guinea and reached the mouth of the Amazon.

Our heroes had heard and read so much of the wonders of the mighty river that they had become impressed with the desire to explore it, but the intense heat, they being now near the equator, forced them to relinquish the idea and make all haste to reach a cooler latitude.

This is a region of the utmost extremes, vessels sometimes lying becalmed for weeks, but our young navigators were fortunate in having a favorable wind, and in six days longer rounded Cape St. Rogue, and then keeping close to the coast trimmed their course for the island of Bahia, or San Salvador.

The view along the coast was magnificent, an ever changing panorama of the light green lowlands with groves of cocoa and plantain trees, and a background of light blue mountains, melting almost imperceptibly into the clear azure of the tropical sky.

Three days after rounding Cape St. Rogue, they passed the coast of San Salvador, and in three more sailed under the guns of Fort St. Crey into the harbor of Rio de Janeiro.

The bay of Rio Janeiro is acknowledged to be one of the finest in the world.

It has but one rival—the far-famed bay of Naples.

No sooner had they landed and satisfied the quarantine and custom house officials than they proceeded to present Senor Manuela's letter of introduction.

The merchant received them literally with open arms, and insisted upon their making his house their home during their stay in the city.

Our heroes acceded willingly, and as their host had two remarkably pretty daughters, they found no difficulty in enjoying themselves immensely.

As for Jack, the lovely Inez had made too deep an impression upon him to be easily effaced, but Frank, being wholly heart free, saw no harm in scooping in all the fun he could in the way of a little harmless flirtation.

Theaters of anything of a high class are not, as a rule, much patronized in Rio Janeiro.

Though, to be sure, there is the Imperial Theater, it is closed most of the year, and those most in vogue are two of but little higher stamp than music halls, called the Alcazar and the El Dorado.

Two rival actresses are the queens of these boards—the Senoritas Anita and Lovato.

Each have separate factions of admirers among the young sports of the city, who assemble in force alternately at the separate houses to hiss or applaud the actress, as the case may be.

There is thus a perpetual contest during every performance between the approbation and disapproval, the party largest in number, and strongest in lung power, being victorious for the night.

As both parties, however, have to pay the price of admission, irrespective of sentiment, the actress is by no means a loser in point of salary.

Our heroes had, after a few days' stay in the town, found themselves the object of everybody's observation, and in fact, quite the lions of the hour.

As both had by this time picked up a conversational knowledge of Spanish, they were able to gather a pretty correct idea of public opinion respecting them.

The story they found the most prevalent was that they were American millionaires, whose wealth was incalculable, and whose

only trouble was how to get the soonest rid of it.

The lavish way in which both our heroes spent their money went far to confirm this belief.

Frank, who was of a more susceptible nature than Jack, and who, besides, had not his friend's restraining influence in the person of Inez, felt a tender feeling springing up in his breast toward the fair Lovato, and before he was aware of it found himself in the habit of attending the El Dorado every evening.

One night, when, as usual, he threw her a costly bouquet, he was both surprised and pleased to see her select it from the perfect flower garden lying on the stage at her feet, and after pressing it to her lips, fasten it in her bosom, where she wore it during the remainder of the evening.

When the performance was ended he tried to gain an interview with her before she entered her carriage, but in vain, and he was forced to return homewards disconsolate and alone.

This, as it chanced, was on the last night but one of their stay in the city.

More than ten days had passed so pleasantly since their arrival that they had hardly been aware of it, and they both agreed it was time to proceed on their tour.

They had laid their plans that after dinner on the following evening they would bid adieu to their hospitable host and family, and proceeding on board their boat, wait until the turn of the morning tide to leave the harbor.

The adieus were accordingly taken in proper form, and our heroes proceeded to make their way to the boat where Sam and Crusoe were already awaiting them.

Rio Janeiro is in reality not one city, but two, dating from different eras, the older portion being built upon an almost level plateau along the shore, while the more recent one is built upon a series of hills further inland.

These two portions are divided by a large park called the Campo de Santa Anna.

The house of the merchant whose guests they had been was situated in the newer quarter, and in order to reach the pier at which their boat lay our heroes were obliged to pass through the park.

As they did so a female figure closely veiled passed them several times, until at last her peculiar actions attracted both their observations.

It seemed as if she tried especially to attract the attention of Frank.

At last, as she passed them by for the fourth or fifth time, she managed, unobserved by Jack, to slip a small note into his hand.

Without mentioning the circumstance to his companion, Frank thrust the note into his pocket and walked on, conversing about other matters, until they reached the wharf at which the Shooting Star was lying.

As soon as he had a chance to do so unobserved he opened the note and read its contents.

It was in English and ran as follows:

"If the young American whose chivalrous nature in spite of himself asserts itself in his every action will assist a lady in dire distress, and whose only fault is she loves too well, let him meet the giver of this note at twelve o'clock on the spot in the Campo de Santa Anna where he received the note, and she will conduct him to

"HER WHO WORE HIS FLOWERS."

For a moment or two Frank hesitated whether or not he should inform Jack of the circumstances.

His prudence suggested that he should pay no heed whatever to it—his spirit of adventure prompted him to keep the appointment.

At last, however, the latter triumphed over his better judgment.

From the wording of the signature the writer was evidently the fair actress Lovato.

Looking at his watch he found it was already half-past eleven.

Unless he made haste he would not be able to reach the park in time, and making some excuse to Jack that he had forgotten something and would be back in the course of an hour or so, he hurried to the place of rendezvous.

Sam was already asleep in the cabin, and leaving Crusoe as watch upon deck, Jack turned in also, and in a few minutes had dropped to sleep.

His dreams were troubled, however, with a

sensation of Frank being in some deadly peril from which he was powerless to help him.

He awoke with a sudden start, and looking at his watch found it was nearly three o'clock.

Frank was still absent.

What could have detained him?

The tide was already on the turn, and arousing Sam, he began to get everything in readiness for departure as soon as Frank should return.

More than an hour more passed, however, and still he did not make his appearance, and both Jack and the negro began to grow anxious lest some accident should have befallen him.

Had they known Frank's peril at that moment they might indeed have had cause for anxiety.

CHAPTER IX.

FRANK'S PERIL.

WHEN Frank reached the Campo de Santa Anna he found the fair giver of the note awaiting him.

Drawing aside a heavy veil she wore she showed a charming face, disclosing two rows of teeth white as pearl, as she said with a bewitching smile:

"I see the chivalry of the young American could not be aware of a lady in distress without coming at once to her assistance."

"Who could for an instant be proof against such charms as I see before me?" Frank answered gallantly.

"But I am not the lady in question," she responded, with another fascinating smile. "I am only to conduct you to her, if you are not afraid to accept my guidance."

"Afraid!" Frank echoed. "I should only be glad to invite danger for the privilege of being placed by your side."

"A truce to compliments, then, senor," she said, "and follow me."

She turned and walked rapidly as she spoke for the distance of a hundred yards or so, where, partially concealed by a clump of trees, a carriage was in waiting.

"Enter, senor," his fair guide said, "and in less than half an hour you will have reached your destination."

Frank made a polite negative gesture.

"After you, senorita," he said.

"But I am not going."

"Not going?"

"No, senor; there is no need of my accompanying you, for the coachman knows perfectly well where to drive to."

For a moment or two a suspicion of intended foul play of some sort crossed Frank's mind, and he drew back his hand from the door of the carriage.

This his fair guide was not slow to see.

"Evidently the senor has changed his mind," she said, with a little laugh, "and is afraid to face the danger, now the protection is withdrawn."

Frank, it must be remembered, was young, and the implied slur upon his courage fired his blood so that, without a moment's further hesitation, he entered the carriage.

No sooner had he taken his seat than the driver whipped up his horses, and they started off at a rapid pace.

Looking out of the window he could see that the direction taken was towards the suburbs.

Now that he had time to calmly consider the circumstances, the adventure did not assume half such a pleasant aspect as it had done at first, and he blamed his own rashness for having entered into it all.

Still it was too late to back down now, and determining to see it out, he examined the chambers of his revolvers and awaited the result.

No sooner had they got fairly clear of the town than the coach suddenly stopped, and about a dozen men with masks covering their faces crowded about the windows.

Frank's revolver was leveled in an instant, but before he had time to pull the trigger half a dozen hands had seized it and wrested it from his grasp.

"No harm is intended you, senor," said one of the men who seemed to be in command of the rest, speaking in very passable English, "but you must submit to our orders and suffer yourself to be blindfolded."

Hardly had he finished speaking than a thick silk scarf was passed over Frank's eyes, and then two of the masked men seating themselves beside him in the carriage,

the driver again started his horses, but at a slower pace than before.

After the space of probably a quarter of an hour more the carriage again stopped, and the masked men taking his hand assisted him to alight, and then led him up a flight of several steps, when the bandage being removed from his eyes Frank found himself standing on the tessellated marble floor of a spacious hall.

He had scarcely time to become aware of this fact than his masked guides withdrew, and a servant attired in a most gorgeous livery approached, and holding open a door with every token of respect, motioned him to enter.

Doing so, he found himself in a spacious apartment, furnished with more than Oriental magnificence. The foot sank nearly to the ankle in the soft velvet pile carpet, the covering of the furniture as well as the curtains of the windows were of the finest Eastern silks, priceless works of art adorned the walls, and every article that luxury or refinement could suggest found a place in the room.

On a table, fairly groaning beneath the magnificence of the gold and silver plate, an elegant repast was set for two persons.

Hardly had Frank entered the room than from a silken covered ottoman, on which she had been reclining, a lady attired with a most artistic negligence arose to receive him.

He had been correct in his conjectures as to the writer of the billet, for his fair hostess was none other than the actress of the El Dorado, the Senorita Lovato.

Taking him by the hand, she led him to the ottoman on which she had been seated, and resuming her place, began to talk to him in a charming prattle of mingled Spanish and English, with her beautiful face so near to his that he could feel her warm breath upon his cheek.

Frank was far from insensible to the charm of the situation, and his arm had stolen around her waist and his language had grown very tender indeed, when suddenly the door opened and the captain of the masked men entered the apartment and stood in silence contemplating the pair.

The actress sprang to her feet in an instant, her breast panting and her hands clasped in an attitude of curiosity, but the man, paying no attention to her tragic attitude, asked roughly in English:

"Have you got the letter yet?"

"Oh, are you indeed inflexible?" the lady began, when Frank also sprang from his seat and advanced towards the pair.

"You spoke to me of your distress, lady," he said. "Tell me, is there no way in which I can assist you?"

"I should say there was," the man broke in, with a hoarse laugh. "Look here, young gentleman, there is no need for any further mystery about the affair. You are our prisoner, and unless you write a note to your friend, which I will deliver, and he pays me ten thousand of your American dollars before noon to-morrow, you die."

Frank looked from the speaker to his fair companion in utter amazement.

"Is this true?" he gasped.

"Alas!" the actress answered, wringing her hands despairingly, "too true, and Jose is pitiless as a man of stone."

"But it is utterly impossible," Frank said; "neither my friend nor myself have one-quarter of that amount in the world."

The man made a gesture of impatience.

"Such idle talk is worse than useless," he said. "Do you think I do not know who you are? The young American millionaires who go sailing around the world for pleasure, not have that small amount? Bah!"

He walked toward the door as he spoke, but suddenly turned again.

"I give you one hour," he said. "If within that time the note to your friend is not in my possession, you die. Remember, I make no idle threats."

He left the room, closing the door as he spoke, and the actress once more sinking among the silken cushions, strove by every means to make Frank write the required note.

Frank was inflexible in his determination not to do so, however, and the actress clasping her small white hands together, looked appealingly into his face.

"At least do not judge me harshly," she pleaded. "Though my fate is mixed with theirs it is the fault of circumstances, not my own. I was forced to write the note that decoyed you here, but if I had time to think I

could even yet devise some means for your escape. Write the letter to your friend, I beg of you, and it will give us time to think of what it is best to do."

"But it is utterly useless," Frank persisted. "As I said before, he and I together have not a quarter of that amount in the world."

With a mute gesture of despair the actress arose, and crossing the room to the table poured from an exquisitely carved pitcher two glasses of wine, one of which she handed to Frank.

"At least drink this glass of wine with me," she said, "to prove to me that you do not think of me harshly for my fault."

Frank hesitated a moment, but seeing she had already raised the glass to her lips he did the same with his own, and swallowed the wine.

No sooner had he done so, however, than a most peculiar sensation began to overpower him.

It was a feeling of utter oblivion to all worldly care; of almost Heavenly rapture, like that of an Oriental hasheesh eater.

He felt like one in a dream, and was dimly conscious of again reclining on the silken cushioned ottoman with the fair actress whispering softly in his ear.

Suddenly, however, he became aware of the presence of a third person in the room, and of a paper held before him which they were coaxing him to sign.

Rallying all his will, which seemed fast deserting him, he again refused, and then a sensation followed like that of a sudden blow.

A thousand lights seemed to gleam around him, and for a moment the blade of a long, keen dagger quivered and flashed before his eyes.

Then all was blank—utter unconsciousness.

CHAPTER X.

A FATAL SHOT.

WHEN Frank recovered consciousness he found himself lying on some loose straw in the corner of what seemed to be the cell of a prison.

His hands and feet were tied by stout cords, so tightly as to cause excruciating pain.

Looking around at the bare stone walls and vaulted roof to even dream of escape seemed hopeless.

But one narrow window, covered with strong iron bars, admitted light, and through this he could see from where he lay that the dawn was already breaking.

His situation certainly was far from an enviable one.

Though his head was heavy, and the recollection of the last incidents of the previous night somewhat vague and indistinct, he still remembered the threat of the bandit chief that if the ransom were not forthcoming by noon the next day his life should pay the forfeit.

That was supposing he wrote the note required of him to Jack, if he did not instant death was to have been the penalty.

Had he, in the semi-delirious state into which the drugged wine had thrown him, been induced to write the words which he had before refused to do?

Turning the matter over in his mind he now hoped he had done so.

Reflection showed him that at any rate it would give Jack a clew to his whereabouts, and he knew his friend well enough to be confident that if it lay within human power to rescue him he would do it.

At any rate he would avenge his death.

Try as he would, however, the events of the preceding evening would not become any clearer to his recollection, and at last he had to give up trying to make them so in despair, and wait as patiently as he could for further developments.

He had resigned himself to his fate, whatever it might be.

Still the thoughts of thus waiting for death were far from pleasant.

Had it been in a fair, open field, he could have borne it, but this being cooped up like an animal waiting until its butchers should lead it to slaughter depressed and made his blood run cold in spite of himself.

As he lay turning these thoughts over in his mind, he heard the key placed cautiously in the lock of the door.

He did not doubt that his hour of death had come, and not without a sigh of relief that

the suspense was over so soon, he nerved himself to show a bold face to his assassins.

He was mistaken in his supposition, for as the door swung slowly open on its hinges, the solitary figure of a woman closely veiled and wrapped in a long mantle entered the cell.

Crossing the floor to where Frank lay she threw aside the veil so as to disclose her features.

They were those of the actress, Lovato.

Frank turned away his face with an expression of disgust and scorn.

"Ah! so it is you," he said, "who have come to exult over the success of your treachery."

The Lovato's beautiful eyes were dim and swollen as if from weeping, and as these words fell upon her ear an expression of the deepest pain sweep across her face.

"You are cruel, unjust," she said; "if it were not for me you would now be dead."

"If it were not for you I would never have been here at all."

"I know it," she answered, "but I told you last night you judged me too harshly. The evil I have done has been forced upon me—I have not done it willingly. If I had not consented to decoy you here, it would have been accomplished by other means. It has been in my heart from the first to save you as much as possible."

The appealing attitude and the sorrow she expressed vibrating in her tones would not have been without effect upon persons of far less tender susceptibilities than Frank.

"Oh, well," he said, "the mischief is done now, and there is no use talking, but I will not blame you if it pains you."

"If I had not complied with Jose's commands," she went on, heedless of the interruption, "my own life would have paid the forfeit. Even now I have had a narrow escape."

As she spoke, she drew aside the lace kerchief from her bosom, and showed a long scarlet gash, marring the beauty of the parian whiteness of her swelling bust.

"That was meant for you," she said. "It was Jose's dagger, upraised to strike you dead, when after drinking the drugged wine you still refused to send word of your capture to your friend that did it."

The vision of the upraised dagger had not then been a mere creation of his fancy, as Frank had been half inclined to believe it, and he began to make some excuse for having misjudged her, but she interrupted him.

"He has gone once more to the town," she said. "When he returns your sentence shall be passed, but by that time you must be out of his reach. I have come to set you free."

As she spoke she drew a knife from the folds of her dress and severed the cords that bound him.

Frank sprang to his feet, his limbs stiff and sore from the cutting bonds, but his blood coursing exultantly through his veins, with the sensation of being once more free.

"I am sorry now," he said, gently, "for having misjudged you so greatly, but under the circumstances it was natural. Will you forgive me?"

For answer the actress cast her lithe white arms about his neck.

"Forgive you, my love!" she cried. "I have nothing to forgive. It is you who must pardon me. I love you, darling, better than my own life, and we will fly together."

This was a little more than Frank had bargained for, yet he could not well make any objection.

The girl had given up and proved traitor to the companions of her whole life for his sake, and he could not in honor do less than offer her what protection it lay in his power to do.

Besides this the Lovato was very beautiful, and the sensation of being thus caressed by her was far from unpleasant.

For an answer he bent and imprinted a kiss upon her ripe, luscious lips.

"Let us lose no time, then, but make our escape," he said.

The actress raised her lustrous black eyes to his.

"You are right, my darling. The horses are waiting. I will lead you to them. Come with me."

Disengaging her encircling arms and taking his hand she led him up several flights of stone stairs until they reached the room in which she had received him the evening before.

Evident signs of a stormy scene having taken place were seen the moment of entering

the room. The table was overturned and the elegant plate and shattered glassware lay scattered in confusion all over the floor.

Taking two revolvers from a table, she gave one into Frank's hand, and thrusting the other in her own bosom, she crossed the room to a huge carved satin-wood cabinet.

Opening a drawer she took out a small satchel.

Having done so she returned to where Frank stood waiting, and looked into his face, her eyes beaming with love.

"See, my darling," she said. "I do not love you because you are rich and I am poor."

As she spoke she opened the lock, and a flash like imprisoned sunlight, almost dazzling Frank's eyes, came from the store of priceless jewels that it held.

"They are yours, darling," said she, simply, giving him the satchel into his hand, "but we are losing time and Jose may return. Come."

She led the way in the garden, where concealed by the luxuriant foliage, two horses were standing already saddled and bridled.

Mounting them they set out, Lovato slightly in advance leading the way.

The house was built in a sort of a mountain canyon, with but a bridle path leading to the main road, and for the space of about a quarter of an hour they could do no more than proceed at a walk.

After that time, however, they emerged upon the highway, when they broke into a sharp trot.

By this time the sun was just rising.

They could see the town bathed in its crimson radiance lying before them several miles away.

"I have chosen this road, though the longest, in preference to the more generally used one," the Lovato said, "because the other is the one by which Jose returns."

Urging their horses still faster, they soon had left the headquarters of the bandits a mile or two behind.

The Lovato was a splendid horsewoman, and her voluptuous and graceful form showed to the best advantage in her equestrian attitude.

The feeling was rapidly becoming stronger with Frank that there were many worse fates in the world than to have gained the love of such a beautiful creature.

Suddenly the actress half checked her horse and listened.

"What was that?" she said.

Frank also reined in his horse and listening, the sound of hoofs rapidly following them was plainly heard.

"It is Jose," the girl said. "Santa Maria, we have no time to lose now."

Again they urged their horses on with redoubled speed, but in a few minutes their pursuers turned an angle in the road, and came in sight of the fugitives.

They numbered in all about twenty horsemen, and at their head rode the chief, Jose.

That, returning to the house and finding the captive gone, they had taken some short cut so as to save much of the ground gone over by Frank and his fair companion was evident.

No sooner had they come in sight than a shower of bullets whizzing about the fugitives showed that their pursuers were either determined to kill or capture them.

Fortunately, however, none of the shots hit either the horses or their riders, and they kept on with unabated speed.

"If we can only reach that angle in the rocks, we can make a stand," the actress said.

The spot to which she pointed as she spoke was one about a hundred yards ahead, where a rock projected across a passage-way so narrow that but one man could pass it at a time, and, urging on their animals, they strained every nerve to reach it.

Suddenly, however, a cry of agony left Lovato's lips, and with her arms thrown wildly in the air, she seemed about to fall from her saddle,

Frank had seized her bridle-rein and checked both his own and her horse's speed in an instant.

"Are you wounded?" he asked.

"It has killed me," she gasped; "leave me—save yourself, I—"

Her voice died away in a choking sob, and she would have fallen insensible to the ground if Frank had not caught her in his arms.

To leave her was a thought that never entered his mind for an instant.

It was possible she might not be dead, but

only have fainted, and, slipping from his saddle, he lifted her in his arms and dashed on foot for the shelter of the rocks.

He felt that his fate was sealed—that though he might hold out for a time the superior numbers of the bandits must triumph in time, but he was none the less firmly determined never to surrender.

If they took him again as their prisoner they would take him dead.

Laying his insensible burden down in the shelter of the rocks, he stood facing his antagonists like a lion at bay.

Twice or thrice his revolver flashed fire, and at each discharge an empty saddle showed each bullet had found its billet.

A volley from the bandits answered his fire, but he had discharged the remaining chambers, and as yet no bullet had struck him.

Stooping, he drew the revolver from the insensible girl's bosom, and again fired as quickly as his fingers could raise the hammer and pull the trigger.

This time, however, his aim was not so accurate, and only two more of the robbers had fallen, while all his ammunition was exhausted.

Seizing the long knife with which the girl had cut his bonds, and which she had still retained, he prepared himself, like a young gladiator, to die, selling his life as dearly as possible.

A shout of triumph rose from the bandits, and dismounting they advanced towards him on foot, their knives gleaming in their hands.

With his back braced against the wall of rock, Frank awaited their coming with the dogged courage of desperation.

They were almost upon him, when suddenly through the clear morning air there rang out sharp and clear a well-known voice.

"There are the beggars! Let them have it hot and heavy!"

A volley of musketry followed, and as the smoke cleared away Frank felt his hand clasped in that of Jack's, while a company of the Brazilian troops were following the fugitive bandits who were trying to escape in the shelter of the rocks.

In a few moments the last of them were taken prisoner, while the military surgeon was bending over Lovato's inanimate form.

Frank held his breath in agonized suspense, lest his fears should be confirmed.

"She is dead," the surgeon said, gravely, rising to his feet, "Her death must have been almost instantaneous."

It was too true. The bullet entering below her shoulder blade had pierced a vital region, and with a heavier heart than he had known since his mother died, Frank rode beside the carriage that conveyed the dead body back to the city. Jack's arrival in the nick of time is easily explained.

Becoming anxious at Frank's protracted absence, he had returned to the house of their late host, who at once had notified the authorities.

As the bandits had become even more aggressive and troublesome than usual of late, a company of soldiers had at once been detailed to proceed in the direction where their concealed fastnesses were supposed to be.

By a lucky chance they had marched along the more unfrequented road by which Frank and the unfortunate Lovato had made their escape.

The rest is known.

Now that she was dead, the jewels the dead girl had given into his care undeniably belonged to Frank, but refusing to accept them, he gave them into the hands of the authorities, merely keeping two magnificent diamonds as large as a walnut, one for himself, while the other he gave to Jack.

The funeral of the dead actress was on a scale of magnificence such as was seldom witnessed in the city. Even the rival faction who in her lifetime had opposed her followed reverently to her last resting place, and the grave was literally covered from sight beneath the load of floral tokens.

Late the same night, when the mourners had all departed and the cemetery was silent and deserted, Frank Weston stood alone by the grave of the girl who had saved his life at the sacrifice of her own, and as he turned to leave the spot, it might be forever, tears that he need not have been ashamed to own, glistened in his eyes.

A few hours later, just as the dawn was breaking, the Shooting Star passed once more under the guns of the fort of the harbor of Rio Janeiro.

CHAPTER XI.

A MYSTERIOUS OCCURRENCE.

FOLLOWING upon the map the route taken by our heroes, we must pass over a distance of more than five thousand miles in as many minutes.

Leaving the harbor of Rio Janeiro, they sailed along the coast more than a week until they reached Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay, at the mouth of the Rio de la Plata.

After a stay there of two or three days, they again made sail, and in less than ten days more passed between Cape de Vergumes on the mainland and Cape Espiritu Santa on Terra del Fuego, into the Straits of Magellan.

Here they encountered considerable stormy weather, and their progress was much impeded by the shoals of floating seaweed.

Occasionally a flying albatross, such as is mentioned in the "Ancient Mariner," passed them on the wing.

They also met some of the natives of Terra del Fuego, paddling in canoes made of rushes and lined with seal skins, but never within speaking distance.

The passage, which is about three hundred miles long, they made in a little over three days, stopping a few hours at Punto de Arenas for a fresh supply of water, and passing Desolation and Queen Adelaide Islands, were once more in the open sea.

They had now reached the Pacific Ocean, in latitude about fifty-two, south, and longitude seventy-five west.

Shaping their course in a direction almost diametrically opposite to that which they had hitherto been pursuing before entering the straits, after a passage of seven days they sailed into the Bay of Valparaiso.

After a stay of a week in Valparaiso, "Vale of Paradise," during which time they visited all the principal points of interest, including a trip to Santiago, the capital, they again put to sea, and after nine day's voyage sailed into Callao Bay, from where in the distance they could see nestling in the sunshine Lima, "the city of the kings."

The wheezy locomotive carried them the six intervening miles to the city.

At the American Consulate they were pleased to find a letter from their Cuban friend, Senor Manuela, awaiting them.

A small note inclosed from the lovely Inez, who was evidently making rapid progress in the study of the English language, was sufficient to send Jack into raptures.

To be sure it contained nothing that any young lady might not submit for the perusal of the most exacting duenna, but then it was sufficient to show she at least had not forgotten him.

By this time our heroes were beginning to be quite famous characters.

The fact of their arrival in the city formed the chief news item of the daily press, and their portraits, including those of Sam and Crusoe, and cuts of the Shooting Star, found a ready sale in the streets.

They were, in fact, quite the lions of the hour, and invitations of every variety of social pleasure poured in upon them so fast that to accept one quarter of them was impossible.

The ladies of Lima are proverbially charming and the time flew by most pleasantly and with amazing rapidity.

Time had blunted the poignancy of Frank's regret for the beautiful Lovato, and already, I am afraid, the charms of the Peruvian belles had driven her image from his mind.

With Jack, however, it was different, and although he enjoyed himself in the society of the ladies he met, his heart always remained faithful to the fair maiden he and his friend had rescued from a watery grave, and whose home was the Pearl of the Antilles.

Frank had yet to meet his destiny—the one great love of his life.

Peru, the land of the Incas, is rich in antiquities.

Everywhere are to be found the ruins of the palaces and cities of the race who, before the Spanish adventurer and his followers seized the land in the name of God and Spain, worshiped their deities in the Temple of the Sun.

There are many ruins in the immediate vicinity of Lima, and one day our two heroes, unaccompanied by any guides, set out to explore one for themselves.

The one they selected was situated about three or four leagues from the city, and had been a small town with a temple and a palace, the summer resort of one of the ancient monarchs.

It was noon when they reached the ruins, and unharnessing the horses from the carriage they picketed them, and set to work to explore the recesses of the ruined temple.

It had been built in honor of and dedicated to the oracle god Rimac, and for two or three hours our heroes wandered through its vast worship halls and endless vistas of corridors, lost in wonder of the skill of those so-called barbarians who could produce such a masterpiece of architecture.

There are legends current of all these ruined temples, of boundless wealth being buried somewhere in their secret recesses.

All the accumulated wealth of the priesthood for centuries, all the gold and jewels on the shrines of the deities, all the vessels of virgin gold used in their mystic religious rites were buried by the priests, who died silent as to the hiding-place of the treasure, and only a tithe of the riches fell into the hands of the Spaniards.

So run the legends.

Were the treasure of but one temple found it would outdo all the hoarded wealth of the Rothschilds—were it all to be discovered it would be sufficient to make the whole world rich.

As our heroes passed through the deserted aisles and tenantless chambers, these stories formed the principal topic of their conversation.

"There are also other stories of these ruins better substantiated than that," Jack said, "which goes to show that their money-making qualities still cling to them."

"In what way?" Frank asked.

"In the way of which you had a slight experience at Rio. Almost every one is said to be the hiding-place of bandits."

"About as true, probably, as the other tales," Frank answered, with a little laugh.

As they were speaking, they entered a long apartment, probably seventy or eighty feet in length, with an arched roof and the walls ornamented with sculptured figures cut in bas relief.

No light was admitted to the apartment by the entrance at either end, and a dim sort of twilight gave a solemn sadness to the place.

There was something so weirdly solemn and depressing in the utter silence and solitude, that our heroes made haste to reach the archway that admitted them into a more cheerful atmosphere.

As they neared the archway, it so chanced that Frank was several yards in advance of his companion, who with his hands in his pockets was strolling more leisurely along, scrutinizing the sculpture of the wall.

No sooner had Frank passed under the archway than he found himself suddenly seized and his hands drawn behind his back, so that any attempt at resistance or even to move was utterly impossible.

At the same moment a dozen or more men, wearing wide-brimmed hats and carrying short carbines in their hands, filed up the archway.

In an instant the fact of their peril flashed across Jack's mind, and involuntarily he thrust his hand into his breast and drew forth his revolver.

Looking behind him, he saw that retreat was cut off by the way they had entered.

For a moment or two he stood irresolute, trying to decide upon the best means of action, when a man dressed like the rest, but wearing a handsome gold chain about his neck and a huge diamond fastening the feather in his hat, advanced a step towards him.

"Attempt no resistance, young senor," he said, "but surrender yourself at once."

Jack's irresolution vanished on the instant, and he stepped back a pace or two nearer the wall with his revolver ready for instant action.

"And suppose I do not choose to do so?"

"Then," said the other, "I must either make you do so, or kill you."

"And who are you, if I may ask?"

The bandit drew himself up haughtily.

"Who am I, you ask?" he said, proudly. "They call me Rossi Arci."

Both our heroes had heard the name of Rossi Arci spoken almost with hushed breath as the most daring bandit that had ever defied the government.

There was no limit to his audacity.

More than once he had made a raid upon the city in broad daylight, and his name was synonymous with everything that was nefarious and cruel.

Still Jack had no intention of giving in.

"Take me, then," he said, "but I give you fair warning, the first man that moves a step towards me dies!"

As he spoke, with his revolver leveled, he sprang backwards, and placed his back against the wall.

Hardly had he done so, than quick as a flash, and with a fierce malediction upon his lips, the bandit chief raised his revolver and fired.

A smothered cry and a sound as of some heavy body falling followed, but no answering report.

That Jack must have been hit seemed certain to Frank, who waited in agonized suspense until the smoke should clear away.

The bandits crowded forward with every expression of surprise and amazement.

The smoke had by this time rolled away, curling up among the arches of the vaulted roof, but no sign of Jack was anywhere to be seen.

He had disappeared—vanished, leaving no trace behind.

CHAPTER XII.

WAITING FOR DEATH.

THE bandits' expression of surprise gradually subsided, and they looked from one to another in speechless amazement.

Nor was Frank in any way less mystified.

The spot where the bullet had struck, the face of one of the sculptured images on the wall, clipping off a piece of its nose, was plain to be seen.

In order to have done this from the position in which Jack had been standing, it must inevitably have passed through his body.

If such were the case, however, where had his body disappeared?

The closest and most minute search could discover no trap door or secret opening through which he could have fallen.

The bandits drew their long knives, thrusting the long blades between the interstices of stones, yet with the same fruitless result.

The occurrence was so very mysterious that their inborn superstitious fears began to assert themselves.

He must, they said, have been spirited away by the evil one.

As soon as this idea began to possess their minds, crossing themselves devoutly and muttering a prayer, they made their way hastily out of the ruins towards the forest which lay half a mile or so distant.

After entering the shadow of the trees and traversing a beaten path for a quarter of an hour or so, they passed several outlying sentinels, and came upon a rough encampment where their companions were preparing supper.

The search for Jack after his yet unexplained disappearance had occupied considerable time, and by this time it was growing dusk.

Though Frank's hands and feet were bound securely, his captors were far from unkind to him, and brought him a share of their supper consisting of a fowl and some native wine, and unbinding as they did so the cords fastening his hands, in order to allow him to eat with more ease.

He felt in little mood for eating, however, and after swallowing a few mouthfuls pushed the remainder away untouched.

Once more securing his hands the bandits left him to his own reflections, while they drew apart into little groups, drinking, smoking and playing cards and dice among themselves.

Gradually the twilight passed and the night came out starlight and beautiful, while Frank still lay vainly endeavoring to find some means to account for his friend's mysterious disappearance.

It was of no use, however, and at length against his will his eyelids closing, he fell into a restless sleep, and dreamed he saw Jack clasped in the arms of one of the huge stone idols who had suddenly become sentinel, and whose embrace was slowly but surely crushing him to death.

If he but known it this dream fancy came nearer the truth than might have been imagined.

No sooner had Jack leaned his back against the wall after defying the bandit captain than he felt it yield to the pressure of his weight.

When the bandit had raised his pistol the boy had involuntarily, without himself perhaps being conscious of doing so, started backwards, and the additional weight thus thrown against the slab caused it to swing open on its hidden hinges.

The next moment he felt himself falling, and the cry heard by both the bandits and Frank was the involuntary one of surprise that left his lips.

The stone slab must at once have swung back to its original position, closing with such force as to fasten it more securely than it had been before.

It is probable it had stood open as it then was, for two or three centuries, the necessary

sort, burned with little or no smoke, diffusing a sensuous aromatic odor around.

In vain did Jack examine the vault from one end to the other; not the slightest trace of the secret aperture by which he had entered could he find.

Piling more wood upon the fire so that he could find the place again, he formed a sort of rude torch out of the resinous wood and the clothing around the mummy, and passed out of the vault into a series of endless corridors and passage ways, all lined with shelves as the other had been, with the mummies, dried and shrivelled in their coffins, lying upon them.

Without the least compunction for disturb-

idol itself were strings of jewels alone of the value of an emperor's ransom.

He could but wonder at it in a vague sort of way, and then sank into unconsciousness.

When he came to himself again it was quite dark, except for a blaze of light flashing from the jewels upon the idol.

For a moment or two he could hardly recall where he was, and then, with a dull, throbbing pain in his forehead, and a feeling of utter weariness over his whole body, he staggered to his feet, and, striking a match, looked around him for more wood with which to replenish the fire.

Two mummies at the foot of the idol's



No sooner had they caught sight of our heroes than they sent a perfect shower of arrows flying in their direction.

force never having been placed against it to force it open, and when Jack had done so its own weight as it swung back into its place had securely fastened the secret spring so as to defy the closest scrutiny from the outer wall.

For some time Jack lay stunned by the force of his fall.

When at last he recovered his senses, he found himself in perfect darkness.

Fortunately he had a box of matches in his pocket, and striking one, by the fitful glare it shed around he could see he was in a long, narrow vault, with shelves on either side, on which were laid tiers of boxes.

He was in the burial place of the priests of the ancient temple, and the rows of boxes contained embalmed bodies.

Jack stood in thought for a moment or two, meditating upon how to escape from the prison into which he had been thrust in so unceremonious a manner.

One thing was certain. Before he could make the least attempt to escape he must have light by some means.

Seizing one of the coffins he dragged it from the shelf, and, sitting down, cut off some splinters with his pocket knife.

In a few seconds a small fire was blazing, throwing a weird, dim light through the vault.

The wood, which was of some resinous

ing their rest, as he went along Jack from time to time replenished his torch, until at last he began to be aware of a languid faintness stealing over him.

It never occurred to him that it was the aromatic odor diffused by the resinous and spice-impregnated wood of the torch he carried.

At last, after a fruitless search of an hour or two, he came into an apartment larger than any he had yet passed through, about seventy feet in length, with a high, vaulted roof, and the walls covered with sculptured hieroglyphics.

At the further end a huge stone altar was erected, and in a niche above it stood a colossal figure of the god Rimán, with open mouth and outstretched hands.

The altar before him was still strewn with ashes, the remains of a sacrifice, and evidently no human footprint had disturbed its solitude since the last priest of the Incas had offered a worship on the shrine.

The insidious aromatic odor from the burning wood was beginning to entirely overpower Jack's senses, and, placing his torch upon the altar, he sank upon the steps beneath it.

Looking around him, he saw the huge candlesticks, tall nearly as a man, and the consecrated vessels, all of solid gold incrusted with gems, in their places as they had been used at the last sacrifice, while around the neck and on the arms and wrists of the

pedestal attracted his attention, and dragging them from their coffins, he once more built a fire upon the altar, shedding a livid light around.

His head was throbbing as if it would burst, and he began to fear he was going mad.

How long he had, in reality, lain unconscious he could not tell, but to him it seemed ages.

As yet the pangs of hunger had not assailed him, but it seemed as if he would be willing to give ten years of his life in return for a drop of water.

His thirst was terrible.

He no longer strove to find any means of escape—all his desire was expressed in the one word, water.

The gleaming, jeweled eyes of the idol seemed to mock him, and a sudden frenzy seized him that if he did die the idol should not sit triumphant over him.

He would drag him down and burn him, jewels and all, upon his own altar.

A laugh horrible to hear left his parched lips as this idea possessed him, and springing towards the image he seized it to drag it from its pedestal.

From its colossal size it looked as if such a feat was impossible, and the united strength of twenty men would scarcely suffice to move it.

No sooner, however, had Jack seized its outstretched hand than it swayed toward him

for a moment or two, and then fell prostrate at his feet.

Instead of the solid, carved figure it had seemed to be, it was little more than a thin shell.

In the niche thus concealed behind it were piled bar upon bar of solid gold, and as it fell a perfect stream of jewels of priceless value and of every hue, diamonds, rubies, emeralds—came pouring upon the floor, like the treasures of the garden of the Enchanted Lamp.

For a moment the thought flashed through Jack's mind, that here was treasure enough to make a hundred men wealthy, and that he could now claim the hand of Inez as her equal.

his mind wandered, and he imagined himself enacting over again scenes and incidents of his previous life.

Now he was at home among the scenes familiar to his early youth, playing with his schoolmates, or at evening going through the green pastures to drive the cows home to be milked.

Again he held the helm of the little Shooting Star in his hands, while the waves rolled mountains high around, and the small but gallant craft he steered in the eye of the wind was tossed like a feather from crest to crest of the angry billows.

Once more he stood upon the deck holding the slavers at bay at the muzzle of his revolver.

and a few lance-like rays of pale yellow light were shooting upwards from the horizon.

Staggering to his feet, Jack looked around him and inhaled the pure atmosphere with a sensation of indescribable relief.

For a few moments he stood utterly bewildered—almost inclined to believe the events of the few preceding hours had been but a dream.

Suddenly, however, the truth broke upon him.

His escape had indeed been but little short of miraculous.

He had been saved by an earthquake. Lima, and indeed the whole coast of Peru,



The savages growing excited, unclasped their hands and made horrible gesticulations of the utmost ferocity.

Then, as he tried in vain to moisten his caked throat and lips, a feeling of the most utter despair came over him.

He knew that already he had been delirious—that soon actual madness would follow, and he would die in agony like some rabid animal.

Before him lay wealth, with none but himself to claim it, sufficient to purchase a small kingdom, yet how gladly he would have exchanged it all for a drink, for the smallest cup of water.

Terrible mockery of fate.

Imprisoned with this almost fabulous treasure, he yet had to endure the slow agonies of torture, waiting the approach of madness—death.

CHAPTER XIII.

AGAIN A PRISONER.

JACK's situation was a terrible and desperate one.

Any chance of escape seemed worse than hopeless.

Nothing less than a miracle, it seemed, could save him.

With this knowledge in his mind he waited impatiently his fearful and unalterable doom, almost praying the end would come.

Gradually he was aware of his senses leaving him, and he sank into a state of delirious half unconsciousness.

Though not as yet utterly bereft of reason

ver; and again the fight in the gray dawn off the mouth of the harbor of Havana was enacted in his imagination.

Ever mingling with these stirring scenes was a beautiful face, that he had first beheld pallid with the tint of death in the dull gleam of the lantern thrown upon the drifting raft—the face of the fair maiden who had taken his heart captive—Inez Manuela.

Faces and scenes shifted in his delirious fancy with the rapidity of thought, yet underlying them all was a sub-current of agonized knowledge that he was only dragging through the time until the end should come.

Through it all, in a vague kind of way, he still knew he was waiting for his death.

Suddenly a sound like a thousand salvos of cannon smote upon his ears and with a shock like that of an electric battery, he was thrown heavily to the ground.

It seemed that the very earth was shaken by the concussion, and with an involuntary cry upon his lips, he experienced the sensation of falling from a great height.

Then his senses left him, and all was blank.

When consciousness came to him again he found himself lying on the brink of a chasm in the rocks.

The cool morning breeze fanned his brow, and above him was the clear, cloudless sky with still a star or two shining dimly down.

Away in the east the dawn was breaking,

is peculiarly subject to these convulsions of nature.

Sailing up the Bay of Callao, on a clear day, the remains of the ancient city, wholly submerged by one of the volcanic eruptions, can still be plainly seen.

That such an event should occur just in the nick of time to rescue our hero seemed almost a special interposition of Providence in his behalf.

At any rate it was a lucky chance.

As the real facts of the case became apparent to Jack's mind he looked around for the dethroned idol and the buried treasure.

They were nowhere to be seen.

On either side and behind him were heaps of overthrown and fractured sculptured stones, and before him was the chasm, on the brink of which he had been lying when his consciousness returned.

Stretching his body at full length on the ground and peering cautiously over the edge he could see it was nearly a hundred feet in depth, and the bottom strewn with the fractured and broken masonry of the ancient temple.

The fact was evident—the treasure was again lost.

The earthquake that had so opportunely saved Jack's life had at the same time once more buried it from sight.

The secret that had been kept so faithfully for so many years was still to be discovered.

The loss, however, did not much affect Jack at the time.

Another subject was occupying his thoughts.

This was the fate of his friend and companion Frank.

For a short time he stood deliberating with himself as to his best mode of action.

Should he at once return to the city and inform the authorities, or should he alone try to trace the bandits to their hiding-place and set his friend at liberty?

He still retained his revolver, with several spare cartridges in his pocket, beside the genuine Bowie which in the land of sudden quarrels and instant recourse to the knife, both he and Frank had thought advisable to always carry with them.

At last he came to a desperate resolution.

He would endeavor to trace the bandits to their hiding place by himself, and if possible rescue his friend from their custody.

It was only, he said to himself, a streak of the most wonderful good luck that he himself was alive at the present moment.

Since fortune had favored him so far he determined to try if she would not prove equally propitious, and pull him through in his new resolve.

Proceeding to the spot where he and Frank had picketed the horses on the previous day, he found them still there, but almost famished for want of food and water.

Slipping the bridles over their heads he led them to a running brook near by, to slaked their thirst, and having done so he once more picketed them, but leaving the bits in their mouths so as to be ready for a start at a moment's notice.

Having done this he once more carefully examined the chambers of his revolver, and then set out to trace the route of the brigands' departure.

By this time the dawn had broken altogether, and a crimson glow was spreading over the sky, heralding the rising of the sun.

Jack had not the least clew to aid him as to the route taken by the brigands, as it will be remembered that his seemingly mysterious disappearance had occurred while the whole party were still in the ruins.

That they had not remained there, was evident, as if they had done so, there would by this time after the shock of the earthquake be some signs of them stirring.

Unless, indeed, they had been buried among the ruins and were dead.

If such, indeed, were their fate, it must necessarily have been shared by Frank.

Probably, until that moment, Jack had never wholly realized the extent of the affection he felt for his friend, when this thought caused his heart to stand still for a moment.

Such a supposition, however, was far from probable.

The most likely one was that they had made their bivouac in the shelter of the woods.

Concealing himself as much as possible by the luxuriant growth of shrubs, and the long grass that grew almost breast high, he made his way in that direction.

Reaching the outskirts of the forest, he still crawled along in the shelter of the underbrush for about a quarter of a mile without seeing signs of any human presence.

Suddenly he saw the polished barrel of a rifle flash in the early sunlight, and at the same time the figure of a man, dressed in the picturesque dress of the bandits, came in view.

He was pacing, with measured steps, up and down, his rifle lying in the hollow of his arm, and was evidently a sentinel.

For a moment or two Jack crouched motionless among the undergrowth until the bandit's back was toward him.

For an instant the idea of springing upon him, and with one swift stroke of the Bowie, silence him forever flashed across his mind.

The next, however, he became impressed with the inadvisability of such an act, and once more dragging his body along with the same noiseless motion, in a few minutes he had passed the line guarded by the sentinel, and was within the limits of the bandit's bivouac.

Directly in front of him, not a hundred yards away, he could see the smouldering ashes of the last night's camp-fires, and lying around them in every attitude, but all with their rifles within easy range, were the bandits themselves.

If they had been aroused by the shock of the earthquake as soon as it was over they had ev-

idently again resigned themselves to slumber.

A little apart from the rest was a solitary figure which Jack rightly judged to be that of the notorious chief of the band.

What most attracted Jack's attention, however, was the form of a youth, whose hands and feet were bound together with stout cords, and who was evidently a prisoner.

At the first glance he knew it to be his friend Frank.

Asleep on either side of him was the form of a bandit, with his hand still grasping the lock of his rifle.

With the exception of the sentinel, the whole camp was fast asleep.

A desperate resolve had entered Jack's mind, which he at once proceeded to put into execution.

This was to crawl stealthily into the midst of the sleeping brigands and cut the cords that bound his friend.

Creeping along through the grass with the sinuous, noiseless motion, that would have done no discredit to a red trapper, with his knife in readiness, he reached the spot where Frank lay.

One swift stroke of the keen-edged blade severed the bonds that held his friend's feet, and shaking him gently, Jack tried to wake him without causing any exclamation of surprise.

Frank's eyes opened slowly, and he gazed about him for a moment or two in a bewildered way.

Placing his fingers on his lips as a sign of caution, in another moment Jack would have cut the cords upon his wrists, when suddenly the knife was wrested from his hands, and his arms pinioned behind him, so that any attempt at resistance was impossible.

Glancing hastily around he saw the grinning faces of two of the brigands looking into his own.

He was again a prisoner without even the chance to fire a shot or strike a blow in his own defense.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TABLES TURNED.

In an instant the whole band were on their feet, their hands grasping their rifles.

It was evident they imagined they had been surprised by the government troops, and were determined to sell their lives as dearly as possible.

His two captors, one on either side, hurried Jack towards the tall figure of the chief, who, with a cocked revolver in his hand advanced to meet them.

"What is the meaning of this alarm?" he asked, in a stern voice, and a frown dark as midnight upon his swarthy features.

The two brigands began to breathlessly narrate the circumstances.

As they proceeded the frown gradually vanished from their leader's face, and a mocking, sarcastic look took its place.

"Welcome, young senor," he said. "After your mysterious disappearance last night we had almost given up the hope of seeing you, but since you were so anxious to join your friend we cannot bear to part with you so easily again."

A loud, jeering laugh arose from the bandits crowding around, and made the hot blood flush angrily to Jack's face.

"You think yourself immensely witty, no doubt," he said, "but I fail to see it. I consider any one a coward who taunts those unable to resent it."

"You speak boldly for one in your position," the bandit answered, the frown again coming upon his face, "and I have known such words as yours to cause the speaker's tongue to be split before now. However, we will let it pass, and while my comrades prepare breakfast we'll talk business together."

Turning to the members of his band, he gave some rapid orders, and they all dispersed to gather fuel and light the fires to prepare breakfast, with the exception of Jack's two guards and two more who went to conduct Frank to the interview with their chief.

Leading the way to a small hillock a few yards distant from the band, the captain seated himself upon a mossy stone and said:

"You know, of course, the reason why you are taken prisoners. It is not often we trouble ourselves to take any, for dead men tell few tales and are less trouble in every way. In your case it is different. You are

able to pay it, and I must have a ransom to set you at liberty."

He named a sum equal to about ten thousand dollars as the price, and our two heroes looked at each other in silence a moment or two before replying.

"Such a demand is utterly out of the question," Jack said at length. "In the first place we have not the money. In the second place we could not pay it if we had. That is our answer, once for all."

He looked interrogatively as he spoke towards Frank, who made a gesture of assent.

For a moment or two the bandit captain seemed struggling to repress his anger at thus being braved to his very teeth.

At last he said, in the same mocking tone he had used at first:

"You, yourselves, are the best judges. I have stated my terms. If you had agreed to them you should have been treated with every courtesy and attention until they were complied with. As it is, you are mistaken in supposing I will order your instant execution. You shall simply be left to starve, and perhaps in the course of two or three days you will have become more reasonable."

He turned away as he spoke, and the guards after binding Jack's hands and feet in a way similar to those of Frank, placed them in a position where their slightest movement could be seen at once.

The bandits having finished preparing their breakfast, the savory odor smiting tantalizingly upon the captives' senses, began eating it in a gluttonous manner with every appearance of the greatest enjoyment.

Not a morsel, or even a drink of water was offered to the prisoners.

When the meal was finished, the captain, accompanied by about ten men, went off on some expedition, leaving the remaining fifteen or so to keep guard over the prisoners.

Before taking his departure he ordered the prisoners to be placed further apart, so that any communication between them would be impossible.

The sun arose and poured down its tropical rays upon our heroes until it seemed to them they must swoon beneath its heat.

Once Frank asked for a drink of water, but the only response was a howl of derision from their captors.

So the day wore on.

Their sufferings were intense, but after that one denied request they bore them in stoical silence.

As the sun was sinking the bandit captain and his men returned.

Our heroes' guards were changed, and the party who had remained with them in charge during the day, sallied out in their turn, probably on a similar expedition to that of their comrades.

No food or drink of any kind was offered them, or a word spoken by their captors, but when the bandits had finished their supper, our two heroes were placed near each other and a guard of four were set over them.

Sentinels were posted as on the preceding night, and one by one the bandits dropped asleep.

The night was calm, and the elements were evidently making up for a storm.

Great clouds obscured the sky, shutting out the stars from view.

Our heroes lay in utter silence.

Their sense of hearing rendered preternaturally acute by the circumstances of their position, they could discern one after another of the bandits dropping off until they were all asleep.

After awhile also they could hear the measured tread of the sentinels growing gradually more irregular until they ceased altogether.

Probably the men were worn out with the fatigue of the day, and tired nature asserted itself against their will.

"If our hands were only free we might yet have a show for liberty," Jack began. "Hist! What was that?"

A faint rustle among the underbrush behind them, so slight as to be unnoticeable except by ears long strained to their utmost pitch of hearing, had caused the exclamation.

Listening attentively for several minutes, no further sound could be heard.

It must only have been imagination.

Suddenly, however, a large, dark object darted between the boys' prostrate forms, and Jack felt something cold touch his face.

The next moment it was dragged away, and a voice whispered:

"De good Lord be blessed, honeys, de ole

man's just in time. Dat dog follered yer tracks just like a Christian."

Our heroes knew in a moment that they again had a chance for liberty.

A slim one, to be sure, but still their situation was such that they would clutch gladly at the slightest straw.

The new-comers were Sam and Crusoe.

"Not another word, Sam," Frank whispered, hurriedly. "Take your knife and cut our cords quick."

Almost before he had finished speaking, Sam had severed the ropes that bound his wrists and ankles.

In another moment both our heroes were at liberty.

A few hurried sentences passed between the three.

Sam's first words had explained it all. Crusoe's instinct had led him to the spot where the boys were prisoners, and the old negro had a carriage waiting at the main road by which, if once reached, they could make their escape.

With the sense of freedom, however, the adventurous spirit of both our heroes returned with double force.

A resolve had taken possession of them simultaneously.

They would not only escape from the bandits' clutches but they would take the whole band prisoners.

Poor old Sam was in agonies on hearing of this desperate scheme, but our heroes were resolute.

The two sentinels still slept, each seated at the foot of a tree.

Stealing upon them with noiseless footsteps our heroes pinioned their arms so rapidly that any struggle was futile, while Sam, with his huge hands clapped over their mouths, prevented them from making any outcry.

They were at once bound hand and foot, and a gag thrust between their teeth.

The old negro's state of terror nerved him and made him act like a hero.

All this had been done so rapidly that from the time Jack had first felt the touch of Crusoe's nose upon his face, it had not been so long as it occupies in narrating it.

The sentinels thus disposed of, our heroes proceeded to do the same with the remainder of the band.

So rapidly and expertly was it accomplished that not a sound issued from one of their throats.

The long scarf wound about each man's waist served to fasten him securely.

Just as they were engaged upon the last of them, however, a pistol shot came whizzing past, knocking off Sam's hat and causing him to utter a yell of terror.

Looking around, our heroes saw the tall figure of the bandit captain advancing towards them, a revolver in each hand and leveled at their hearts.

It was a critical moment.

The next instant would decide their fate.

It was life or death, and death held the chances.

Even while these thoughts flashed through our hero's minds the two reports rang out simultaneously.

Two flashes of fire lit up for a moment the darkness of the night, but the two bullets whizzed harmlessly past.

At the same moment the bandit captain, with a gasping, choking cry, was borne heavily to the ground, Crusoe's teeth meeting in his throat.

The next instant our heroes had reached the spot, and calling off the dog, bound him in the same way as his followers.

Our heroes had turned the tables with a vengeance.

The notorious bandit, Rossi Arci, and ten of his band were their prisoners.

CHAPTER XV.

A DESPERATE SITUATION.

As yet it was little past midnight.

A slight wind had sprung up, and the clouds beginning to break, showed the threatening storm had passed away.

The next question was, what was to be done with the prisoners?

To conduct them all to a place of safe custody was out of the question.

On the other hand, were they to be left where they were until a large enough force for their escort could be found, their companions might in the meantime return and set them at liberty.

No other plan appeared feasible than to place the chief in the carriage in waiting, provided by Sam, and drive with all possible speed to the city, running the chances of the bandits returning before they could arrive with a suitable escort.

This was accordingly done.

Stanching the wound in the bandit's throat caused by Crusoe's fangs as well as was possible under the circumstances, he was lifted into the carriage and driven as rapidly as possible to the city.

The distance, which was between twelve and fifteen miles, was made in a little less than an hour and a half.

Proceeding at once to the police headquarters, the bandit chief was placed in custody, and a sufficient force immediately dispatched to secure the remainder of the band.

Those already taken prisoners by our heroes were at once conveyed to the city in carriages sent for that purpose, while the constabulary laid low in the underbrush to await the return of the rest of the band.

When at last they returned a desperate fight ensued, and those of the bandits who were not killed were taken prisoners and conducted to the city to await their trial with their comrades.

Without a moment's waste of time our heroes took measures to again find the treasure discovered by Jack during his imprisonment in the vaults of the ruined temple, but all in vain.

The secret of the priesthood of the sun that had been so well kept for more than two centuries was a secret still.

Perhaps a more diligent search and the expenditure of money in elaborate excavations might once more have unearthed it, but our heroes could not afford to lose any more time and expense upon such problematical explorations.

Their stay in Lima had already far exceeded the time they originally intended, and they were anxious to again put to sea and proceed upon their tour.

They were now, without exception, the biggest lions in Lima.

The name of Rossi Arci had so long been a terror and bugbear to the citizens that they were ready almost to invest his captors with supernatural qualities.

A standing reward for his apprehension, amounting in American currency, to over a thousand dollars, was at once paid to them by the municipal authorities.

Our heroes came to the conclusion that it in reality belonged to Sam and Crusoe, and determined to divide it between them.

A solid silver collar was to be bought for Crusoe, and the remainder handed over to the old negro.

No sooner had rumor got abroad, however, than the Lima ladies raised a subscription list to defray the cost of the collar, and the whole of the thousand dollars was given to Sam.

When Sam saw the heap of shining gold and silver piled up before him and was told it was all his own, he began to think a tour of the world was not such a bad enterprise after all, and expressed himself ready and willing to fight any number of bandits, or do anything that brought in such a rich reward.

On the day of our heroes' departure a perfect ovation was offered them.

The train from Lima to Callao was crowded with enthusiastic citizens eager to wish them success; and high mass was said in the cathedral for the safe termination of their voyage.

The whole shore was lined with spectators, among whom were many of the fairer sex, who waved their handkerchiefs and threw bouquets after them for good luck, while the guns of the fort honored them with a complimentary salute of six guns as they sailed clear of the harbor, once more into the open sea.

The voyage they were about to make was the most arduous and perilous they had yet undertaken.

It was to sail in an almost direct line for nearly six thousand miles across the Pacific, passing through the islands of Oceanica to the continent of Asia.

The route taken was almost identical with that of the Wilkes Exploring Expedition in 1839.

After a passage of over three weeks, without sight of land, and almost continuous stormy weather, they sighted one of the islands of the Pemanto group.

The sight of the low, white beach, emerging into the luxuriant vegetation, overtopped by the graceful palm and coca-nut trees was so refreshing to their eyes, weary of so long seeing nothing but rolling seas from horizon to horizon, that they determined, should the natives prove friendly to take a rest of two or three days before proceeding on their journey.

Accordingly, standing in close to the shore, they ran into a sheltered lagoon and came to anchor.

The coral reef stretching for several hundred yards from the shore, covered with water only several feet in depth, they were obliged to wade the distance.

There were no signs of the island being inhabited, and for two days they enjoyed the freshness and the beauty of the scenery, only returning on board the boat to sleep at night.

The fact of their imagining the island to be uninhabited, caused them to be less regardless of precautions than they might otherwise have been.

They had intended to again set sail on the afternoon of the third day, and in the morning went on shore to gather a supply of cocoanuts and bread fruit to take with them.

They had gathered a sufficient supply, and were preparing to return when Sam, who was a little in advance of the others, came running back with every token of terror upon his face.

"Oh, de good Lord hab mussy!" he gasped. "We'll all be killed and eat up now, shuah."

Our heroes, following the direction of his pointing finger, saw a sight that certainly was calculated to arouse their apprehensions.

A fleet of twenty or thirty canoes, literally packed with naked savages, were drawn around the little Shooting Star.

They seemed to be regarding her attentively, and with many expressions of admiration.

Some of them had already disembarked from their own crafts, and were swarming over the deck of the boat, while others stood waist deep in the water, cutting off the means of return from the shore.

All were armed with bows and arrows, as well as long slender lances and shields covered with some species of untanned hide.

Our heroes looked at one another in silence. The situation was a desperate one.

It was plain to be seen that the savages did not mean to be friendly, as their weapons and the crimson hue of their tattooing showed them to belong to a war party.

If our heroes were on board their little craft they could afford to defy them, but here they were entirely at the savages' mercy.

It was a forlorn hope, but the only chance was to make friendly overtures to them, and each accordingly seizing a branch of palm as a token of amity, our heroes emerged from the shadow of the foliage.

That the savages were not to be propitiated by any such means, however, soon was evident.

No sooner had they caught sight of our heroes than they sent a perfect shower of arrows flying in their direction.

At the same moment the savages scattered in the water between the Shooting Star and the beach, raised their lances threateningly, and advanced towards the shore.

In an instant the knowledge flashed through the minds of both our heroes that their doom was sealed.

It was certainly the most desperate situation in which they had yet been placed.

The odds were several hundred to one against them.

Even had the idea of surrender crossed their minds for a moment, it would have availed them nothing.

It would only be an exchange of a death in action for one of torture.

There was no alternative but to fight it out to the last, dying, as men of their nation should die, with their faces to the enemy and their weapons in their hands.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE JAWS OF DEATH.

WITH a fierce yell the disembarked savages made for the shore.

Those on board the canoes also joined their companions.

As yet, they were at too great a distance for the arrows to do any harm, but let them advance a few hundred yards further, and not a miracle, it seemed, could succor our young adventurers.

While they were as yet out of the reach of the arrows, however, the savages were quite within range of our heroes' revolvers.

Singling out each a savage, noticeable among his companions by the finery of his head-dress, both Jack's and Frank's revolver spoke simultaneously.

With a single cry upon their lips the chiefs sprang into the air and then fell dead.

Our heroes now held a hurried consultation together.

"Our only plan is to separate," Jack said, "into two parties; you and Sam in one, Crusoe and I in the other. By this means, perhaps, one of us can escape and get on board the boat. It is a forlorn hope, but the only one left us."

As he spoke he thrust his revolver, with five charges still remaining in the chambers, into Sam's hand.

Then laying himself at full length upon the grass he began to crawl away noiseless as a serpent in an opposite direction to that taken by his friend and the old negro.

A desperate resolution, that seemed almost madness to dream of, has taken possession of Jack's mind.

Would it be successful?

Endeavor alone would show.

To be so it would require no small share of more than common good luck added to extraordinary coolness and intrepidity.

Meanwhile Frank and Sam made their way at a rapid pace toward the interior of the island.

To escape seemed hopeless, but they wished to find a spot where they could make a stand and at least die not unavenged.

A place suitable for such a purpose, however, they could not find.

They, therefore, hurried on, sheltering themselves as much as possible behind the trunks of the tall trees and among the luxuriant undergrowth.

It was a race for life that could have but one termination, and that a fatal one.

The savages were gaining on them rapidly.

Already one of them now and then came so near that an arrow could reach the fugitives.

As they did so, however, Frank paused a moment and discharged his revolver.

One by one the foremost pursuers dropped dead in their tracks, until six of them had bit the dust.

As he ran, after each time he discharged the weapon, Frank loaded again.

Sam had already discharged all the chambers of the revolver Jack had thrust into his hand, but his shots had been wild, and done but little execution.

It soon became evident the savages were gaining even more rapidly upon them, and a short time more must decide the fate of the fugitives.

Already the arrows were beginning to whistle disagreeably close about their ears, and stuck quivering in the trunks of the surrounding trees, or buried themselves in the ground at their feet.

Suddenly a loud cry of mingled pain and terror from Sam told that he had been hit, and he sank helplessly to the ground.

Frank knew that in all probability the tip of the arrow was poisoned, and if so that his very minutes were numbered, and it was beyond all human power to save his life.

Still he was determined not to go back on the old man, but to remain with him to the last.

Hastily plucking the arrow from the wound he tied his handkerchief about the limb.

The added pain of the extraction caused Sam to faint, and with his hands clenched he rolled over insensible as a log of wood.

Seizing him by the collar Frank dragged him as much as possible in the shelter of a trunk of a large tree, and with a revolver in each hand stood over his prostrate body.

Seeing that he had come to a standstill the savages suddenly stopped short in their pursuit, and seemed to be holding a consultation of some sort among themselves.

What it was about of course Frank was utterly unaware.

They had, however, stopped the volleys of arrows, and grateful for the momentary relief Frank waited anxious to know their next movement.

He had not long to wait.

Suddenly a gigantic savage, who, by the elaborate tattooing on his body and the richness of his head-dress, was evidently a chief of high rank, sprang forward and brandishing his spear, rushed towards the spot where

Frank was still keeping guard over the yet unconscious Sam.

Even before the cry had left his lips, however, again Frank's revolver had flashed fire, and with his arms thrown wildly up and clutching at the air for a moment, the savage fell upon his face, shot through the heart.

Once more the pair of revolvers spoke in such rapid succession that it seemed like a continuous volley, until six more of the savages measured their lengths beside that of their chief.

For a moment or two the savages were checked by this deadly fire and once more held a hurried consultation among themselves.

Of what nature it might be, one conclusion was evident.

They had determined to take the boy a prisoner unharmed, for they no longer let fly any arrows.

The charges in Frank's revolvers were now reduced to three, and his ammunition was exhausted.

Again two reports rang out, but before he could discharge the remaining loaded chamber the savages were upon him like a resistless torrent, and the next moment both he and Sam were prisoners.

CHAPTER XVII.

AGAIN AFLOAT.

In a few moments the savages had the captives' hands and feet securely bound with thongs of what seemed to be rope made of the fibrous texture of some plant.

So tightly were they tied that the knots cut the flesh, causing the most excruciating pain.

That the arrow which had struck Sam had not been poisoned, and the wound was not a dangerous one, soon became evident, and he opened his eyes and looked in a bewildered way around him.

No sooner had he caught sight of the crowd of swarthy faces, hideous in their tattooing, and with every expression of ferocious triumph upon them, than he swooned away again, this time from actual terror.

Frank was not one of the swooning sort, and besides, he had resigned himself to meet his fate in utter silence, but as he looked around the circle of fiendish countenances even he could not help a cold shiver running through him.

Drawing a little apart from their captives the savages began jabbering away in a vehement manner, using many gesticulations to give emphasis to their opinions.

From the glances cast in their direction and the pointing gestures towards them, Frank knew it was his own and his companion's fate they were discussing.

A sort of feeling of agonized curiosity took possession of him to know what they were going to do—a desire to be put out of suspense at once.

Suddenly a wild yell arose from all their throats, causing poor old Sam once more to arouse from his comatose state and leap, bound as he was, almost a foot from the ground.

It was evident some proposition had been made which had been received with every manifestation of fiendish glee.

The captives were not long kept in ignorance of what it was.

Hardly had the shouts of delight subsided before a dozen had seized them and raised them to their feet.

Then they were conducted to the trunk of a tree, and the bands upon their arms and legs being severed, they were once more bound firmly, this time to the tree, with ropes of a similar fibrous wooden substance.

Meanwhile, the savages not thus engaged were busy collecting armfuls of dry material which they heaped around the roots of the tree.

The fate intended for the luckless captives was now only too plain to be seen.

They were to be burned alive and tortured at the stake.

Despite Frank's cool and undoubted bravery, he could not help his heart quailing within him at the thought, while as for Sam, his terror had almost reduced him to a state of imbecility.

No sooner had the preparations been completed than the savages withdrew to a little distance and an old man bent almost double with age, and enveloped in a long robe of some rich material, advanced from among them.

He carried in his hand a long, slender wand, and uttering some words in a sort of sing-song, bent his body three times in obeisance to the north, east, south and west.

From the reverent attitude of the savages it was evident he was one of their high priests performing some mystic ceremony.

Having done this he was joined by three other priests, who, each in turn, went through a similar performance.

When they had concluded, they raised their voices together and began a sort of monotonous chant, keeping time with the staffs they held in their hands.

As they did so, the rest of the savages started from their reverent attitudes, and joining hands, formed circle upon circle around the captives and the priests.

All adding their voices, the chant, at first low and monotonous, gradually swelled louder and more discordant, and the savages growing excited, unclasped their hands and made horrible gesticulations of the utmost ferocity.

Their eyes flashed, their features were contorted, and their voices had gradually arisen to a howl like a pack of famished wolves searching for prey.

It was a blood-curdling spectacle to see and hear.

It more resembled what might be imagined as a revel of fiends than that of human beings.

The feelings of the captives may, in a slight degree, be imagined—to describe them is impossible.

They almost prayed that the fire would be lighted, and the torture over.

They had not long to wait.

Suddenly four flaming torches of resinous wood were handed from the crowd to the priests, who, waving them above their heads, began a gyrating dance around the piles.

Each revolution brought them nearer to the heaps of material dry as matchwood, and the savage horde ceased their yells and held their breaths as the priests advanced the torch to light the funeral pyres.

Already were their hands stretched forth to do so, when, through the solemn silence, rolled a sound that caused them to draw back and look at one another with glances of amazement and affright.

It was the sound of a cannon.

That they had heard similar sounds before, and probably had reason to remember them with dread was evident, for at once the torches were dropped from the hands of the priests, and the whole horde rushed to the edge of the woods to discover whence it proceeded.

They had probably expected to see some man-of-war or other vessel standing in towards the shore to justly chastise them for their deviltry, but in that surmise they were mistaken.

What they saw was this:

On the deck of the Shooting Star stood Jack Stetson busily reloading the cannon that stood on the small quarter deck.

The previous report had only been of blank powder, in order to attract their attention, but this time he was cramming down the muzzle handful after handful of musket bullets and iron nails, more deadly and terrible at close quarters than a grape and canister.

Still this was not all.

In their eagerness to capture the fugitives, the savages had started in pursuit, leaving their canoes unprotected.

As the party was evidently a warlike one, there was not even a woman or child to give the alarm.

This fact had made Jack's escape comparatively easy, and had also enabled him to completely turn the tables upon them.

Their canoes had been left at anchor beyond the reach of the surf that broke over the coral reef and in comparatively deep water.

The tide was on the turn, with a fresh wind blowing from the shore, and no sooner was Jack aware of this turn, with his bowie knife in his teeth, he swam to where they lay, and in a few seconds the whole fleet was being carried by the wind and tide out to sea.

No sooner did the savages see this sight, than repeating their former act of indiscretion, they surged in a body to the beach to swim out and try to secure their canoes.

In a few seconds the captives, whose doom seemed inevitable but a moment or two before, were completely alone.

But of what use was their solitude? They still were prisoners.

Oh, but for one swift stroke of a knife in friendly hands, or a knot imperfectly tied by their captors, and they might still have a chance for liberty and life.

Both wishes seemed equally in vain, however, for strain every nerve and muscle to its utmost, the tough bonds holding them would not yield an inch.

Meanwhile, they could hear the yells of the savages, with the occasional report of a revolver.

All their endeavors were in vain, and they had again to resign themselves to their fate, all the more dark and dismal for the mocking hope for a moment held out to them.

Suddenly a rustling was heard in the undergrowth behind them.

Was it one of the savages returning to make sure that they had not escaped, or some wild animal or deadly reptile creeping upon them in their defenseless state?

Never for an instant did they dare to dream it was a friend.

In a few seconds the dense vegetation parted, and the animal, for animal it was, came cautiously in sight as if he was well aware of the danger he had to elude.

What a throb of joy the hearts of both Frank and the old negro gave as they recognized him.

It was Crusoe.

His rough hide was dripping with water, and fastened to his collar was a Bowie knife.

The sagacious animal, as if he knew just what he had to do, went straight to Frank, and springing on him, laid his two fore paws upon the boy's shoulders.

Bending forward as far as his bonds would allow him, Jack seized the knife by the handle firmly in his teeth.

By the most strenuous exertions and after several ineffectual attempts, the rope around his chest was severed, and thus being more at liberty in a moment or two more his hands were free.

To sever the rest of the cords and set Sam also at liberty, was the work of an instant, and then he crept cautiously forward to discover the cause of the savages' sudden stampede.

Up to this time he had been in utter ignorance of Jack's gallant undertaking.

Now a feeling of the utmost admiration rose in his mind for his friend, while he determined not to be outdone, and that between them both they should yet triumph over their savage enemies.

The first thing to be accomplished, however, was to reach the boat in which Jack was gallantly keeping the savages at bay.

How was this to be done?

How to pass through the horde of savages that were between his friend and himself without again falling into their power?

It was a desperate situation, and none but a desperate measure could hope for success.

It was a desperate resolution Jack formed.

Hastily stripping off his shirt he made Sam do the same, and then placed upon his own and the negro's head a plumed head-dress from two of the savages who had fallen before his deadly aim.

Then each seizing a spear and shield they crept towards the beach, and keeping themselves concealed as much as possible behind the shields rushed boldly into the water a little apart from the main body of savages.

Sam's wound was growing very painful, but the thought of escape triumphed over every other for the time, and he exerted himself to the utmost.

He was swimming for his life, and he knew it.

Swimming in an angular direction away from the scene of the conflict they shaped their course so as to reach the boat from the opposite side.

This ruse which was adopted to still further delude the savages, was perfectly successful.

They took them for two of their own comrades, more adventurous than the rest, who had adopted this mode of attacking their enemy in the rear, and watched their near approach to the boat with much satisfaction.

Jack, however, was not thus deceived.

He recognized his friends at once, and was congratulating himself how easily the savages had been taken in.

By this time the canoes were rapidly drifting beyond all reach of recovery.

The savages made the most desperate efforts to reach them, but in vain.

As any one of them gained a little in advance of his fellows, he sank beneath the water, shot dead by Jack's unerring hand.

The skill and rapidity with which he handled the weapons, discharging and loading again, was little short of marvelous.

No time seemed to be lost, but both the small arms and cannon spoke with death-dealing lips incessantly.

That he had not been hit by any of the flying arrows was little less than a miracle.

The aim of the savages, however, had at first been disconcerted by their position in the water and their too great eagerness, while now they desisted for fear of hitting their two supposed comrades who were going to board the boat.

Thus unmolested, Frank and the old negro gained the side of the boat and clambered over the gunwhale, Crusoe following and shaking the water from his shaggy hide in a perfect shower.

Not a word passed between our heroes, but in an instant the canvas was spread, and Frank, still in the trappings of the dead savage, seized the tiller, while Jack and Sam hoisted the anchor.

For a moment or two the savages stood, struck utterly dumb with amazement.

Then the knowledge of how they had been fooled flashed upon them, and a shower of arrows almost darkening the air flew after our heroes.

They came too late, however, for the little Shooting Star feeling the press of the canvas, seemed almost to leap out of the water, and with a hearty American hurrah of triumph, our adventurers were once more at sea.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GODDESS OF THE ISLAND.

In a short time the island gradually faded from view.

The last seen of it was through the telescope; by the aid of it they could still see the outwitted savages thronging the shore, and still gesticulating wildly with every expression of impotent rage.

They could afford to laugh at them now, and once more our heroes shook hands and congratulated themselves on their escape.

"If it had not been for Crusoe, however, we should never have pulled through," said Jack; "if he had been killed before he got to you with the knife we would have to have passed in our checks for certain."

"Crusoe's a better man than half that go around on two legs, anyhow," Frank answered. "And Sam, too, is beginning to show up nobly. We'll have his education pretty well complete by the time we reach home again."

The old negro raised his hands in a deprecatory way.

"Fore de good Lord, Massa Frank," he said, "I don't want no more. Dis darky got more than enough now. De ole man ain't no hog, and his time is a-comin' along quick now."

Though his words were so lugubrious, his look and manner were so unintentionally comical that both of the boys burst into a hearty fit of laughter.

"Yes, you may laugh, chile, but I tolle you dar ain't no call for to be runnin' yerself into danger and gettin' made a cripple for life by wild heathens dat don't know nothin' of the gospel."

Sam's wound, though painful, was in reality not at all dangerous, and there was no fear of it making him a cripple. It was merely a flesh wound, and, carefully washed and dressed, in a day or two had begun to heal.

For four days after their narrow escape from the savages our adventurers enjoyed fair weather, with a fresh and favorable breeze.

During that time they passed many groups of small islands, all alike in the luxuriance of their verdure and white beach, on which the surf broke over the coral reefs, and flashing in the sun like a myriad of gems.

On some few could be seen traces of habitation, but the majority seemed to be as ignorant of human presence as when the Pacific first washed their shores.

Still, after their late experience, they deemed it just as well to give all the coasts as wide a berth as possible.

On the fourth day they came in sight of a small island not set down on the charts.

It was not more than several miles in length by as many broad at its longest and widest part, and after coasting about it for several hours, and scrutinizing it carefully through the spy glass, they at last came to the conclusion it was not inhabited.

As their supply of water was nearly exhausted, they determined to land and fill their casks.

Bringing their boat to anchor in a miniature harbor, Jack and Sam went ashore to search for water, leaving Frank on board.

They determined not to be again caught napping as they had been before.

Sam's wound was rapidly healing, and he was able to move around without any inconvenience.

The little harbor in which they had come to anchor was a beautiful spot, with the luxuriant tropical verdure running down to the water's edge. On one side it sloped in gentle undulations to the sea, while on the other a bluff of some pure white gypsum-like substance arose almost perpendicularly nearly a hundred feet in height.

At the base of this eminence Jack soon discovered a spring bubbling up pure and cool.

Our heroes' idea became strengthened that the island was not inhabited, for the birds did not seem alarmed at their presence, or offer to fly away at their approach.

Still they did not neglect the precaution of leaving one of the party always on board the boat in case of a sudden surprise.

By the time all the water-casks had been refilled, the sun was beginning to draw near the horizon.

The sunset came with all the splendor peculiar to those latitudes.

The sky was one gorgeous mass of gold and crimson and purple, wave upon wave of burnished glory, and ray upon ray of iris-tinted light.

The sea in its reflection was scarcely less magnificent, while the ripple of the opaline light upon the billows and the dash of the gleaming surf over the reefs of coral.

Altogether it was a sight to witness and remember for a life time.

Our two heroes stood upon the shores admiring the gorgeous beauty, when suddenly an exclamation of surprise from Jack caused his companion to start.

"Look there!" he said.

Following the direction of his pointed finger to the top of the white cliff now gilded with golden glory, stood a solitary figure.

It was that of a young girl.

For a moment or two both the boys stood gazing in silent wonder, not more at the unexpected occurrence than at the marvelous beauty of the girl.

She was dressed wholly in white, with a scarf of some rich material lightly wound about her head and falling over her shoulders, while from beneath it a very wealth of rich golden hair floated on the gentle breeze.

Standing there in the glory of the sunset she seemed almost like some supernatural visitor, a being more than mortal, the goddess of this island in the sea, and our heroes were almost afraid to breathe less the beautiful vision should vanish from their sight.

No sooner had she caught sight of them, however, than an exclamation of glad surprise left her lips, and waving her handkerchief she began to descend the cliff to where they were standing.

CHAPTER XIX.

WRECKED.

The girl continued to advance until she reached the spot where our heroes stood.

"Are you English?" she asked, in a voice remarkably sweet and musical.

"No," Frank answered, politely moving his cap as he spoke, "we are Americans."

A glad cry left the girl's lips, and she clapped her hands with the glee and abandon of a child.

"So am I," she said. "Now at last we will be rescued."

By this time our heroes had recovered from their first surprise, and Jack asked:

"You have been shipwrecked, I presume?"

"Oh, yes, but it was many years ago." In fact, before I was born."

"Before you were born?" our heroes echoed in one breath.

"Yes," the girl answered, "I have lived here all my life. I am very happy here and could continue to be so, but my poor mother is very unhappy, and is always longing to

once more see her native land. It will be the greatest happiness she can have to see you. Will you come with me to where she is?"

Our heroes looked towards where the boat lay off the shore, and then at each other.

"Nothing would please us better," Jack answered, "but in our absence some of the natives may attack the boat."

"Oh, you need have no fear about that," the girl answered, laughing. "There is no one on the island but mama, and Monday, and myself. It is quite uninhabited."

With this assurance our heroes signified their acquiescence, wondering in their own minds who Monday might be.

Now that they could see her closely she appeared even more beautiful than she had seemed when she stood like the goddess of the island in the full radiance of the sunset.

Though not above the middle height, her form and figure were perfect, and her carriage graceful as that of a young gazelle. Her complexion, which seemed to have defied the power of the tropical sun, was clear and transparent, with a bloom upon the cheeks like that of a peach. Her eyes were of the softest shade of a violet, full of womanly sweetness; and her hair was of the richest tint of golden sunshine.

As they followed her guidance, the two boys could not help a feeling of interest and curiosity in their minds to know more of her history.

With the joy she felt at their arrival beaming in her face and sparkling in her eyes, she proceeded to enlighten them as they walked along.

They need have no fear, she said, of any attack upon them by the natives. This was a sacred island, and for a member of any one of the tribes of Oceanica to set their foot upon its shore was sacrilege, to be punished by instant death. So Monday had told them.

Who was Monday? He was a native of an adjacent island, who had been washed ashore three years before during a terrific storm, in an almost lifeless state, and her mother and she had nursed him until he recovered.

He had been their servant ever since, and they had called him Monday like Robinson Crusoe's man, with the difference that it was on Monday he had been found, dashed almost dead by the breakers upon the beach.

"Your parents, then," Jack said, "must have been a great many years upon the island?"

"Oh! yes," the girl answered; "it is nearly seventeen years since papa and mamma were cast away here. They were going from Lima to India, and the ship went down, and all but they were lost."

"Then, if I am not impudent, may I ask how old you are?"

"I was sixteen last birthday."

"And you have never had any companions but your parents? You must have felt very lonely sometimes?"

"Not until poor papa died. That was nearly four years ago, and since then both mamma and I have been very sad and felt very lonely. He was so kind and gentle to us, and when we laid him in the grave in our little garden, and knew we should never hear his loving voice again, it seemed as if our hearts must break."

A mist of tears dimmed the girl's beautiful eyes at the remembrance, and the boys, respecting her sorrow, were silent.

While this conversation had been going on, they had come in sight of a small cottage, built of timber, and surrounded by a garden gay with a tropical brightness of flowers, and now their lovely guide opening a little wicket gate, they entered the inclosure.

A native, who, from the girl's information, they knew at once to be Monday, was busily engaged digging on one of the beds, while on the veranda surrounding the cottage a lady was sitting.

The whole scene was so utterly unexpected that for a moment or two it was hard to believe they were not in the midst of a civilized country instead of upon an unknown island in the Pacific.

The lady's agitation upon seeing our heroes was so great that for a few moments it seemed as if it must overpower her.

There were many lines of care and sorrow upon the lady's face, and her hair was streaked with gray; but in spite of this it was evident she must at one time have been most rarely beautiful.

Twenty years before she must have looked much as her daughter did at present, and

from the first moment Frank looked upon her a feeling that he had seen the face at some previous time had taken possession of him.

When or where it was, however, he could not recall.

The story she told our heroes was pretty much the same as her daughter had done, with a few extra facts omitted in the girl's narrative.

Her husband and herself, nearly seventeen years before, had taken passage on a steamer from Lima to India. She had but a few months before experienced a great grief in the loss of her first child, and her husband, who was engaged in trade with the East Indies, having to make the trip himself, and thinking the sea voyage would assist her to regain her spirits, persuaded her to accompany him.

When they had been about three weeks at sea, however, a fierce hurricane came upon them, and a panic seizing the crew, they took the boats, leaving the passengers to shift for themselves as best they could, and lashed to a mast, after being tossed a day or two the plaything of the waves, they were cast ashore upon this uninhabited island.

They were free from any intrusion from the natives of the adjacent islands, and this fact, though striking them as singular at the time, had since been explained on account of its being held in their superstitions as sacred, while no sail had ever come in view.

A year afterwards their daughter was born, and they gradually became reconciled to their lot, and were content to end their days on the spot Providence or chance had seen fit to cast them.

The death of her husband, however, had put a sudden stop to this state of contentment, and she once more began to long for some means of returning to her native land.

Still, for her own part she would have been content to end her days and rest her body beside that of her husband, but she felt it was a duty she owed her child to return, if ever the means offered, to her native land and claim her rights.

Besides her husband's property, which both in land and funds was large, she possessed in her own right one of the finest estates in Maryland.

When her claim to it was proved, her daughter would be one of the largest heiresses in the United States.

Our heroes at once hastened to place whatever accommodations the little Shooting Star possessed at their service until they could reach some port where more convenient passage could be procured.

This was at once accepted in the same spirit it was offered, and instant preparations were made for their departure.

Up to this time our heroes had been ignorant of the names of the lady and her daughter.

They now learned that that of the lady was Mrs. Clifford, while her daughter was named Cora.

No time was lost, and by the afternoon of the following day they were ready for a start.

Before leaving, however, Mrs. Clifford opened a door leading to an inner chamber in the cottage, and our heroes, entering as she desired, saw before them, heaped half way to the ceiling, bar upon bar of solid gold and silver.

Our heroes gazed in wonder at this unexpected sight, when the lady, opening the door of a smaller closet, reached a casket from the shelf, and opening the lid showed it to be full of the most magnificent jewels.

"You see, so far as wealth goes," she said, with a sad smile, "the island owes us nothing."

Then she went on to explain that during the first year of their forced sojourn her husband had found, cast away and buried in the sand, the rotten wreck of an old Spanish galleon, probably a treasure ship returning to Spain with the Peruvian spoils of Cortez and his followers.

All this wealth that now stood before their eyes he had conveyed from the cabin to the cottage, and it was but a tithe to what still lay among the sand that had drifted over the hull and through the breaches made by the waves in the rotting timbers.

The knowledge, however, was of little use to our heroes.

With the three passengers and the extra quantity of stores required on their account, it was impossible to place on board their little craft more than half of even the

treasure that the lady's husband had conveyed to the cottage.

It seemed while fortune favored them in their adventures, she seemed determined that they should return from their tour as poor as they began.

For the fourth or fifth time a colossal fortune had been within their reach, only to disappoint them.

Regrets on this point, however, were worse than useless, and the extra stores, with as much of the treasure from the cottage as was possible, placed on board; by the following evening the Shooting Star, with its three passengers, was once more proceeding on its journey.

CHAPTER XX.

THE GLORY OF BUDDHA.

THE accommodations on board the little craft were necessarily somewhat crowded.

The ladies, however, were used to roughing it, and were only too pleased with the hope of once more reaching their native land to heed a slight temporary discomfort.

The little cabin, was, of course, set apart for their use, while the rest of the crew, including their native servant, Monday, made the best shift they could on deck.

Monday, who was a most intelligent fellow and had been instructed by the ladies until he could talk as fluently as a European, was of great assistance to them in their journey, advising them at which islands it was safe to land for supplies, and acting as interpreter upon such occasions.

For a little over four weeks they sailed in this manner, until they passed the court of Papua or New Guinea and entered the Malay Archipelago.

Four days later they reached the coasts of Borneo and Java, and in less than a week more came to anchor at Singapore, a British town at the southern extremity of the Malay peninsula.

Here our heroes took leave of their fair passengers, who were to proceed by steamer by way of the Suez canal to Europe, and from thence to the United States.

The parting on both sides was not without emotion, for during their long cruise together they had grown much attached to each other.

On Jack's part it was a feeling such as he had never felt before, and for which he could not account.

It was wholly different to that which he felt for the fair Inez—more the feeling he would have known had the elder lady been his mother and her daughter his sister.

On Frank's part, however, I do not think the old lady entered much into his calculations, for he had fallen over head and ears in love with the beautiful Cora.

That his passion was not wholly unreciprocated was evident from a whispered confession breathed in his ear an hour or two before their departure, and as the steamer sailed out of the harbor a handkerchief fluttered in the hand of one whose violet eyes were wet with tears.

The same evening our heroes also set sail, and by the time the morning broke were sailing through the Strait of Malacca into the Indian Ocean.

Encountering much stormy weather, it was nearly two weeks later before, rounding Doudra Head, they passed the town of Galle, and came to anchor in the harbor of Colombo, the capital of Ceylon.

The adverse weather they had encountered had kept them always on the alert, night and day, and feeling much used up, they determined to make a stay of a week or more to recruit.

If rest was what they were in search of, however, but little opportunity was given them of finding it, for they had not been in the town an hour before attentions of every kind began to be showered upon them.

The whole English population seemed to vie with each other to do them honor.

Invitations to balls, picnics, excursions, and every description of social enjoyment, which to refuse, would have given but needless offense, were showered upon them, and their life was one unceasing round of pleasure and gaiety.

Among the rest, a good tiger hunt was got up on the most gigantic scale.

The party, among whom were many ladies, numbered nearly a hundred, without counting the whole army of native servants, and mounted on elephants, they made a journey of a whole day into the interior of the island.

When night came, a regular encampment was made on the banks of a small river, and the band of native musicians began to tune their instruments for a dance.

The majority of the party, however, were too fatigued with their day's journey to care for any terpsichorean amusement, and they gradually desisted, to gather around in groups to hear stories of former tiger hunts and narratives of adventures told by the older hunters present.

The form of recreation was gradually growing wearisome to our heroes, when a remark was made which riveted their attention.

"As long as we are here in the very locality where it is hidden," one of the party said, "why not change the object of our expedition and search for the lost glory of Buddha."

Inquiring further, the following legend was told them:

When the island had first fallen into the hands of the British, but a mile or two from the site the party had chosen for their camp, stood a temple dedicated to Buddha.

The hoarded wealth of the priests was something fabulous, but their greatest treasure was a huge diamond, whose fame had spread over the whole of India.

Beside it, the celebrated Kohinoor paled into insignificance, and its name in the native language was "The glory of Buddha."

For hundreds of years, day and night, it had blazed its light upon the altar before the idol, and when the Brittish troops laid siege to the temple, the priests had fought like flends for the preservation of their sacred relic.

One by one they were overpowered, and the soldiers rushed to the altar, fighting fiercely among themselves as to who should first clutch the glorious prize.

All alike were doomed to disappointment, however, for when they reached the spot, both the glory of Buddha and the jewels from the neck and wrists and forehead of the idol had disappeared.

Among the slain, the body of the high priest of the order could not be discovered, and it was evident that he had escaped, bearing his deity's most cherished treasures with him.

That he must have escaped into the jungle, and there fallen a prey to some savage beast or reptile was the only explanation of his disappearance; for the most diligent search could find no traces of his flight, and the jewel had never since been seen by mortal eyes.

Such was the legend.

That it was regarded as a mere idle tale by most of the party was evident, and the conversation turned into other channels.

On the minds of both our heroes, however, it had made a great impression.

Though somewhat improbable, there was nothing impossible about it—indeed quite the reverse.

Could they but find it, their dearest ambitions and most cherished aspirations would become a reality at once.

It was hardly reasonable to suppose, however, that the treasure lost for more than a century could by any streak of good luck fall into their possession, and with a half sigh over the impossibility of such a thing, our heroes at last fell asleep, to dream of gigantic diamonds hanging tantalizingly near, but which when touched, changed into lumps of worthless stone.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN DEADLY PERIL.

THE following morning, before the sun had risen, the whole party, with the exception, of course, of the ladies, had set out for the hunting grounds.

Most of the hunters kept near to each other in a compact body, with the exception of a few more venturesome than the rest.

Among these were our heroes.

Hardly a quarter of a mile from the camp they had discovered what they imagined to be the tracks of a large tiger, and had at once followed the trail.

So intent were they upon their purpose, that they perhaps were unaware of how far they had traveled.

Suddenly a few yards ahead of them, they heard a slight rustle among the leaves, and each hastily pausing in the shelter of a trunk of a tree, the next moment the head and furtive fierce eyes of a huge tiger peered out and looked cautiously around.

No sooner had he discovered our heroes than he sprang full into view, his tail switching

angrily, his eyes glaring and his whiskered lips drawn back, disclosing his fierce white teeth.

In an instant Frank raised his rifle to his shoulder and fired.

The bullet struck but did not disable the savage brute, and with a blood-curdling yell of rage he sprang upon the boy.

This time Jack's rifle rang out, and the ferocious animal fell dead, a bullet through his brain.

It was not an instant too soon, for already his claws had touched Frank's shoulder, tearing his sleeve and scratching the flesh.

"Are you hurt, old fellow?" Jack asked, anxiously, hastening toward him.

"No, nothing but a mere scratch, thanks to your sure aim," Frank answered, "but I feel a little faint, I suppose, though, there is not a drop of water to be found for miles."

Parting the bushes with his hand, Jack saw ahead of him what seemed to be the entrance to a cave.

For an instant he imagined it to be the lair of the tiger he had just killed, but soon saw he was mistaken, as the grass and vegetation around the entrance was untrampled and undisturbed.

Parting the luxuriant foliage still further, both the boys peered into the recesses.

It was a cave the formation of which would be a puzzle to any scientific theory, being a sort of irregular tunnel, seemingly twenty or thirty feet in length and about half as wide.

The sides and floor seemed to be of clay, yet inside there was no sign of vegetation, but only a green, slimy mold, covering everything inches thick.

Suddenly an exclamation of surprise broke from Jack's lips, and stooping, he examined something lying across the entrance.

It was a human skeleton partially preserved from decay by the mold that coated it.

Even in the semi-darkness, from among a little heap of bones and fungus growth that had evidently once been a hand, something sparkled with gem-like brilliancy.

Pausing a moment to assure himself it was not the gleaming eyes of some deadly reptile, Jack stooped and picked it up.

It was a small key of curious workmanship, and evidently cut by the patient labor of years, out of a single diamond.

Simultaneously the same thought came into the minds of both the boys, almost taking away their breath.

Could it be possible that this was the body of the fugitive priest, and they had found the hiding place of the sacred jewel lost for more than a century.

Before they had time to speak, however, the sound of voices near showed the rest of the party had come up, and without a word they rejoined them.

Expressions of admiration of our heroes' courage and marksmanship arose on every side.

The tiger was found to be a terrible "man-eater," who had kept the natives in dread for more than a year before.

The body was conveyed in triumph back to the camp, and the hunt was over for the day.

Pleading fatigue, our heroes retired to their tent and held a long and earnest consultation together.

It was evident they had found at least a clew to the hiding-place of the sacred jewel.

Unaware whether the government might not claim a share of its value if they were lucky enough to find it, they determined to keep their discovery to themselves, and start out that night to make a thorough search.

When they had come to this resolution, it seemed as if the day would never pass, but the longest day must have an end some time, and at last night came, and after awhile the whole camp was asleep.

Arming themselves each with revolvers and cutlass, they stole cautiously through the sleeping encampment, and walked rapidly until they reached the jungle.

Both the boys were perfectly aware it was an adventure full of no common danger—that the path was full of hidden perils, and that each step they took might mean death.

Their every motion might unearth some deadly serpent, for whose poison there was no antidote; every limb overhanging their path might conceal the slimy lengths of some terrible boa-constrictor; every clump of the luxuriant foliage hide the lair of some savage animal waiting to spring upon them and seize them for his prey.

Intent upon their purpose, however, and grasping their revolvers in their hands, our heroes kept on until they reached the mouth of the cave.

Lighting a pocket lantern they had brought with them, they stood a moment looking at the darkness and loneliness of the forest behind them and then entered the cavern.

As they stepped over the moldy skeleton of the priest, a huge many hued lizard crawled from among the moldering bones and wriggled out of sight.

Pausing to look around the interior of the loathsome place, a huge bat flew against the lantern, knocking it to the ground and leaving them in terrible darkness.

They both started back in an unutterable terror, when Frank suddenly seized Jack's arm.

"See!" he cried. "The jewels! Look how they sparkle even in the darkness!" and in his excitement he was about to spring and grasp the supposed treasure, when his companion seized his arm and dragged him forcibly back.

"Are you mad?" he said. "It is the eyes of a snake!"

As he spoke he struck a light, when they could see a cobra with his baleful eyes gleaming fiercely from under his hood, and his head raised ready to strike.

Quick as thought Jack, leveling his revolver, fired, and the erect crest fell a bloody mass to the ground.

Frank at the same moment had presence of mind to relight the lantern, and the two boys looked at each other with a deep breath of relief.

It was only for an instant, however, for the next moment the spot where the snake still lay writhing on the ground became absolutely alive with deadly reptiles, their eyes flashing, stings protruding, and giving vent to an angry hiss blood-curdling to hear.

The scene for the next few seconds baffled description. Instinctively drawing their cutlasses, both the boys slashed wildly right and left into the nest of snakes.

More like madmen they seemed than anything else as their weapons flashed and they trampled the reptiles under the heels of their heavy boots, but at last they were victorious without either of them receiving a sting.

"For God's sake, Jack," Frank panted, "Let us search for the jewels and get out of this accursed place."

"But where are we to look?" Jack began, when fancying he saw a snake once more erecting its crest to spring he made a slash at it.

The stroke severed the reptile's body, and the point of the cutlass burying itself in the ground, struck against something that gave forth a metallic sound.

In an instant he was scraping away the earth with the point of the weapon, and a few minutes later a large gold casket was brought to view.

"Hurrah!" he cried; "the treasure!" Frank, old man, was it not worth the risk after all?

Even then so elated were they that they paused, with hands trembling with eagerness to unlock the casket, and raising the lid, all the light of the imprisoned jewels blazed out with a splendor that dazzled their eyes.

The "Glory of Buddha" was found.

Tradition had not lied as to its value. There was held in that casket three times the price of an emperor's ransom.

They stood gazing at them in silence for a few moments, fascinated by their magnificence, and then, closing the lid, Jack placed the casket in Frank's hands, and then led the way to the entrance of the cave.

He stepped over the skeleton of the priest, Frank following, and was just in the act of putting aside the bushes before the entrance, when suddenly some large, dark object like a huge branch swung for an instant before him, while two glowing eyes like coals of fire glanced into his.

Then, with a wild cry of horror, he felt his body encircled by the deadly folds of a boa-constrictor.

CHAPTER XXII.

A RECOGNITION.

AFTER that first involuntary cry of horror, no sound left the boy's lips, but his sensations were such as no pen can describe.

He felt the loathsome coils drawing closer around him, and knew that in another moment or two the limit of human endurance would be reached.

Though in reality not twenty seconds had elapsed since the serpent had first grasped him, his agony had been so intense that it seemed an age.

With electric rapidity all the incidents of his past life flashed before his mental vision, and with the knowledge that his doom was sealed, he thought a prayer and thanked God the suspense would soon be over.

Closing his eyes he had resigned himself to his fate, when he felt the living coils that were strangling him loosen and fall away.

At the same moment a pistol shot sounded in his ears, and then he sank to the ground utterly unconscious.

It was his companion who had saved him, severing the body of the snake with his cutlass, and then killing him just as the envenomed jaws were opening in his convulsions of pain, by a well-directed shot from his revolver.

The embrace of the serpent had not had time to be fatal, and gradually the boy's consciousness returned.

His companion was kneeling beside him trying to force some brandy down his throat.

A mouthful or two of the spirits had the effect of reviving him sufficiently to regain his feet, and our heroes made all haste to leave the jungle.

They reached the camp before the dawn had broken, and soon all recollection of the deadly peril they had gone through was banished in the contemplation of the jewels.

They were indeed a prize worth facing death to win.

The sacred jewel alone was worth more than enough to make them both wealthy for life.

Discussing the matter, they came to the conclusion to inform no one of their discovery, and accordingly they again joined their companions as if nothing had taken place.

In three days more the hunting party returned to the town.

Though most earnestly pressed on every hand to lengthen their stay, our heroes were impatient to proceed on their journey, and accordingly once more put to sea.

After a passage of nearly two weeks they reached Aden.

Staying here only long enough to procure a fresh supply of stores, they passed through the straits of Babel Mandeb into the Red Sea.

A journey of more than a week followed until they passed through the Suez Canal into the Mediterranean.

As they sailed along the coast they saw many bands of Arabs watching them, but they met with no adventures worth narrating.

To tell the truth, they were not anxious to do so.

The value of the jewels in their possession was too great to run the risk of losing them, and besides, both our heroes were beginning to have a desire to see their friends again.

Sailing along the Mediterranean, touching at Cyprus and other places of interest, until they reached Malta. They stayed there for a day or two, and then slightly changing their course, they passed Cape Bon and stood along the coast of Algiers.

A fortnight after leaving Suez they passed through the Straits of Gibraltar into the Atlantic.

A few days were passed pleasantly at Cadiz, and then once more putting to sea, they sailed along the coast of Portugal for four days, and rounding Capes Finestre and Ortegal entered the Bay of Biscay.

The Bay of Biscay is known the world over for its stormy seas, but our heroes were fortunate in having fair winds and fine weather, and three days after rounding Cape Ortegal reached the port of Brest on the north coast of France.

From there, after a run of a day and a night across the English channel, they cast anchor in the harbor of Plymouth.

Their reception was enthusiastic, almost the whole city turning out in force to see the little boat and the crew who had successfully accomplished the feat of circumnavigating the globe.

This was peaches and cream for Sam, who put on as many airs and pointed out the merits of the boat with as much pride as if he had been the originator of the enterprise.

What gave our heroes most pleasure, however, were four letters awaiting them at the post-office.

The first of these was from Senor Manuela,

and informed them that both he and his daughter were on a visit to New York, where they intended staying for a few months.

The other was from Mrs. Clifford, again thanking them for the service they had been to her, and telling them that though having satisfactorily proved her claim to the Maryland estate, as it at present had a tenant she and her daughter were also residing in the Empire city.

Both these letters were addressed jointly to our heroes.

The other two, however, were only intended for the personal of those whose names they bore.

The writers were Inez Manuela and Cora Clifford.

Whatever the contents of the two missives may have been, it was sufficient to make both our heroes more anxious to see the fair writers in person.

The whole width of the Atlantic had yet to be crossed before this could be accomplished, and for a time the idea entered our heroes' minds to take their passage on board a steamer.

It need hardly be said Sam favored their proposal to the utmost.

After more consideration, however, they relinquished the idea, and determined once more to test the capabilities of their stanch little craft. Accordingly, bidding the coast of England farewell, they started on the completion of their homeward voyage.

Each day's adventures, as may be imagined, were sufficiently exciting, and far from lacking the zest of danger, but there is neither time nor space at disposal to narrate them in detail.

Sufficient to say, that thirty-three days after leaving the English coast, they again came to anchor in the little harbor from which they had sailed at midnight the previous August.

It was now the middle of June, and they had been absent more than ten months.

After the cordial greetings of their friends and relations, which were none the less warm on account of the immense wealth of which they had become the possessors, our heroes at once started for New York, where they were driven to the hotel where Senor Manuela and his daughter were staying.

The gentleman's welcome was warm and sincere, while that given by his beautiful daughter to Jack, if less effusive, at least was not less cordial.

At any rate he seemed well enough pleased with it, and such being the case, it certainly should satisfy everyone else.

As soon as their visit to Senor Manuela was over, our heroes proceeded to call upon Mrs. Clifford.

The lady was delighted to see them, and expressed again her earnest gratitude, as well as congratulations, upon the successful termination of their adventurous undertaking.

It was now Frank's turn, and it must be said the result of his interview with the lovely Cora did not appear to be any less satisfactory than that of his friend with the beautiful Cuban heiress.

Our heroes were not long in arranging an introduction between their friends.

The two young ladies took to each other at once, and soon became fast friends, while it gradually became evident that Senor Manuela was not altogether insensible to the charms of the still handsome Mrs. Clifford.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONCLUSION.

THE time for the next two or three weeks passed very pleasantly indeed.

Each day found some new form of amusement, and the hours glided by only too rapidly.

Thrown so much in the company of the girls they loved, neither of our heroes missed an opportunity for many a tender little episode.

One afternoon the party visited Prospect Park.

Senor Manuela and the ladies occupied the carriage, while our two heroes rode on horseback beside it.

Suddenly Jack's horse, which he had bought but the previous day, shied violently at some object moving along the shrubs, striking his fore legs against the hind wheel of the carriage.

Jack was a splendid rider, but his skill was unable to check the horse from falling, and

the next instant horse and rider lay in a heap on the hard carriage way.

Frank was out of his saddle in a moment, while the occupants of the carriage also crowded around with every expression of dismay at the accident.

The horse regained his feet and stood trembling in every limb, but Jack lay motionless upon the ground, a thin, crimson stream trickling over his face.

A fear took possession of the party that he was dead.

Fate is often thus cruel.

The great African traveler, who had faced death in desert and jungle for years, returns home to be killed by the accidental discharge of his gun in climbing over a fence—the dashing general who had led his men into the jaws of death and up to the mouth of the enemy's guns a hundred times, is killed by a spent bullet when the battle is won.

So Jack, after sailing around the world in a craft scarcely larger than a pleasure boat on a lake, facing the dangers of tempests and escaping death a hundred times by sea and land, might but have returned home to be killed by a simple fall from his horse.

With these thoughts agitating his mind, Frank pressed forward to raise his friend in his arms.

As he did so, and opened the bosom of his shirt to give him air, the small gold locket found there when he had been washed an ocean waif to shore, was seen still hanging about his neck by a slender chain.

No sooner had Mrs. Clifford's eyes fallen upon it, than with a wild ejaculation of surprise, she made a step forward, and then sank fainting to the ground.

Raising his friend's inanimate form in his arms, Frank placed him in the carriage, and leaving Mrs. Clifford to the care of the rest of the party, gave the coachman orders to drive to the nearest doctor's at once.

Presently a feeble moan left Jack's lips, and he opened his eyes slowly and gazed around him in a bewildered sort of way.

It was only immediately to sink into unconsciousness again, however, and as they had by this time reached a doctor's office, Frank alighted and rang the bell.

The doctor was fortunately at home, and Jack was at once placed in his care.

He pronounced the wound a dangerous one, but not necessarily fatal.

He proceeded at once to administer restoratives and dress the wound.

After a few moments Jack again opened his eyes and feebly held out his hand to his friend.

"It was a pretty near go that time, old fellow," he said, "but I guess I am better than a dozen dead men yet."

Meanwhile the carriage had been sent back to Mrs. Clifford and the rest of the party.

When the lady slowly recovered consciousness, she gazed about her for a few minutes in a bewildered sort of way.

"Is it a dream?" she murmured. "It is impossible it can be so, and yet—"

Then as recollection returned more clearly, a look of the greatest joy came into her face.

"No," she cried, "I am not, I could not be mistaken! It is he! Oh, lose no time, but take me to him at once!"

By this time the carriage had returned, and the whole party entering it were driven to the doctor's house.

Frank met them at the door.

Almost frantic with anxiety Mrs. Clifford rushed to meet him, with hands clasped appealingly.

"Tell me the worst at once," she gasped. "Is he dead?"

"No," Frank answered. "I do not think he is in any danger."

A cry of happiness broke from the lady's lips.

"Thank God for that," she said, fervently.

Then, after a moment's pause, she added eagerly:

"You have known your friend a long time. Has he any near relatives?"

Frank looked the surprise he felt at this question, as he answered:

"He has none of whom he knows."

"Tell me all," the lady cried, even more eagerly. "Tell me all you know of his history. The request may appear strange to you, but believe me, it is no idle curiosity that prompts me to ask."

Thus urged Frank related the story of his friend's life as the reader already knows it.

When he had concluded the lady was too agitated to speak for a few moments.

Suddenly she started forward, her whole face irradiated with happiness and her voice quivering with joyful emotion.

"It is he. It can be no other," she cried. "Oh, do not lose a moment, but take me to him at once."

Leading the way to the room where Jack lay he opened the door, and the lady, rushing to the bed, knelt beside it, and cast her arms about the boy's neck.

"God, I thank thee for this great happiness," she cried, her eyes streaming with happy tears. "I have found my son—my darling child I mourned as dead."

For a moment or two Jack, as well as Frank and the rest of their friends, who had by this time also entered the room, were too bewildered to comprehend the situation.

At last, however, the fact dawned on them that Jack had at last found out the secret of his birth, and he was Mrs. Clifford's son—Cora's brother.

Still in dumb amazement, they listened while the lady told her story.

Her husband, as has been before mentioned, was engaged in a trade which necessitated frequent voyages.

A few months after their first child was born she had accompanied him to the West Indies, where they had remained more than a year.

On their passage home they encountered a terrible storm, which overtook them off the coast of Georgia.

For two days they were driven before it, and there was no sign of it abating, when, on the second evening, the cry was raised that

the vessel had sprung a leak and was fast sinking.

A rush was at once made by the panic-stricken crew for the boats, but hardly were they got afloat than the sea swamped them, with all on board.

Seizing two broken spars, Mr. Clifford lashed them together, and to them bound his wife and child, as well as the child's nurse and himself.

Hardly had he done so, than a shiver, like a living thing, ran through the doomed ship, and she sank beneath the waves.

All night long they were tossed from bilow to billow in cruel sport, by the angry sea.

Before the morning broke, however, all consciousness had left the lady.

When she again recovered her senses it was to find herself in the cabin of a steamer bound for Central America, and to learn from her husband's lips of the loss of their child.

The ropes lashing the two spars together had given way, and in the darkness they had drifted apart, separating herself and child forever.

The grief caused by this calamity had prostrated her with brain fever, and even after she recovered, the remembrance so preyed upon her spirits, that she had been persuaded by her husband to accompany him on a voyage to the East Indies.

This voyage, as the reader already knows, resulted in a second shipwreck and a forced exile of nearly eighteen years on one of the islands of the Pacific, which at once accounted for the fact of the ocean waif never having been claimed.

Now, however, all the mystery of his birth

cleared up, he had found a mother, and she a son of whom she might well be proud.

Such was Mrs. Clifford's story.

Her story has been told, so has that of our two heroes' adventurous trip around the world.

Jaek rapidly recovered from the wound occasioned by his fall, and two months later a double wedding party stood before the altar of one of the most aristocratic churches.

The brides were the fair Cora, and the not less beautiful Inez—the bridegrooms our two heroes.

As soon as the ceremony was over, the two happy pairs started by the same train on a short wedding trip, while Senor Manuela and Mrs. Clifford remained to have everything prepared to welcome them home.

The example of their children must have been contagious, for when the time arrived, the lady had also changed her name to that of Manuela.

Frank purchased a fine estate near that of his friend Jack in Maryland, where they both continue to live.

Senor Manuela did not return to Cuba, but selling his estate there, purchased a fine residence on the Hudson, and made America the home of his adoption.

Two other characters of our story must not be forgotten.

One is Crusoe, who still continues to wear the silver collar that he so nobly earned.

The other is Sam, who circulates between the two households, as much at home in one as the other, and is never tired of recounting the heroic deeds he performed, and the hairbreadth escapes from death he encountered during the time he went Around the World in a Sail Boat.

[THE END.]

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